In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالى:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴾

Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

(*Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* 33:33).

Prophetic traditions mentioned in both in Sunnī and Shī'ah authoritative reference books of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur'an) have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively refer to the People of the Cloak [*ahl al-kisā'*], viz. Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn ('a) as the *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the Household). For instance, refer to the following references: *Sunnī:* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), *al-Musnad*, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130; Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al.; Al-Dūlābī (d. 310 AH), *Al-Dhuriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 108; Al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH), *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā'*, 5:108; 113; Al-Ḥakīm al-Nayshābūrī (d. 405 AH), *Al-Mustadrak 'ala' ṣ-Ṣaḥīḥāyn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146-147; Al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH), *Al-Burhān*, p. 197; Ibn Hājar al-Asqalānī (d. 852 AH), *Fatḥ al-Barī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7:104.

Shī'ah: Al-Kulaynī (d. 328 AH), *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 1:287; Ibn Babawayh (d. 329 AH), *Al-Imāmah wa' t-Tabṣīrah*, p. 47, *ḥadīth* 29; Al-Maghribī (d. 363 AH), *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, pp. 35, 37; Al-Ṣādūq (d. 381 AH), *Al-Khiṣāl*, pp. 403, 550; Al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), *Al-Amalī*, *ḥadīth* 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following books of *tafsīr*: Al-Jassās (d. 370 AH), *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; Al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), *Zād al-Masīr*; Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Tha'labī (d. 825 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Ṭabarī (d. 875 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*; Al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH), *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*; Al-'Ayyāshī (d. 320 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Qummī (d. 329 AH), *Tafsīr*; Furt al-Kūfī (d. 352 AH), *Tafsīr* at the margin of the exegesis of *Sūrat al-Nisā'* verse 59; Al-Ṭabarsī (d. 560 AH), *Majma' al-Bayān*, as well as many other sources.

The Role of Taqlīd in Human Life

قال رسول الله ﷺ:

"إني تاركٌ فيكُمُ الثَقلين: كتاب الله، وعترتي أهلَ بيتي، ما إن تمسكتُم بهما لن تضلوا أبداً وأَنَّهُما لَن يَفترِقا حتّى يردا عَليَّ الحوضَ"

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) said: "Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [*thaqalayn*]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [*'itratī*], the members of my Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [*ḥawḍ*] (of *Kawthar*)."

Some references:

- Al-Ḥākim an-Nayshābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak 'alā'ṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533
- Muslim, *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English translation), book 31, *hadīth*s 5920-3
- At-Tirmidhī, *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, *hadīth*s 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219
- An-Nasā'ī, *Khaṣā'iṣ 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, *hadīth* 79
- Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190
- Ibn al-'Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, p. 277
- Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa'n-Nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 209
- Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 199

Naṣīr ad-Dīn al-Albanī, *Silsilāt al-Aḥādīth aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Ad-Dār aṣ-Ṣalāfiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358

The Role of Taqlīd in Human Life

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PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim *ummah* with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imāms of the Prophet's Household (*'a*), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments

contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shī'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shī'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household (*'a*) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imām al-Mahdī, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Ayatullah Muhammad Taqī Miṣbaḥ Yazdī the author of the present book, and Mr. Agha Ali Raza Rizvi, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly

INTRODUCTION

Human beings constantly require accurate and authentic information in order to make correct choices; choices that may lead them towards a successful attainment of their respective goals. Such knowledge is an essential element required for the proper management of their individual and communal lives, be it in this world or in the Hereafter. Therefore, we find man continuously striving to increase his understanding through meticulous research. However, since human intellectual and physical capabilities are inherently limited, it is fundamentally impossible for individuals to encompass all the knowledge that exists within the vast universe of arts and sciences. As such, they are forced to follow the opinions held by experts within all these different spheres of learning. Consequently, the practice of *Taqlīd* or "obeying expert opinion" becomes an inescapable necessity within human society. In fact, it forms an essential pre-requisite for personal and social development, playing a major role in the effective organization of human ideological and behavioral systems. Through imitating the eminent scholars and academic authorities within each field of study, truth and law become the supreme criteria of action within a given human, and especially Islamic, community. This, in turn, prevents the appearance of chaos within society, inhibiting individuals from interfering in, and expressing views on, subjects that lie outside the scope of their expertise. The Holy Qurān focuses its attention upon this very factor when it says:

﴿ ... فَسۡـَٔلُوٓاْ أَهۡلَ ٱلذِّكۡرِ إِن كُنتُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُونَ ﴾

"… ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know"[1]

Once we come to grasp the pivotal importance of *Taqlīd* or "obeying expert opinion" in furnishing information crucial to many of man's affairs, we immediately begin to comprehend the depth of man's intrinsic need for adequate and trustworthy role-models. Indeed, it is because of this most natural and critical of needs that God Almighty blessed humanity with the Seal of the Prophets (s) and his twelve immaculate Successors (as). He sent forth these divinely guided role-models in order to lead all of mankind to the highest pinnacles of material and spiritual prosperity. They are the light that illuminates the path of wayfarers who search for true progress and ultimate success.

Today, when we have no access to these immaculate Guides and continue to languish within a period of occultation,[2] their task within Islamic society is carried on by the *Ulamā* (religious scholars) and the *Marāji'* (supreme authorities in Islamic law). Such learned and pious experts are indeed the most rightful inheritors of the Holy Prophet (s) and his sacred progeny. They selflessly dedicate their entire lives to the thorough study, painstaking preservation and zealous propagation of

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Naḥl: 43.

2. The Shiites believe that the 12th and final Imam, Al-Ḥujjat ibn Al-Ḥassan Al-Askarī (as), the 12th direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and also the Imam of our Age, is currently in a state of occultation and will appear at the end of times to fill the Earth with peace and justice.

Almighty God's final religion. It is their unrelenting struggle that protects the intellectual and spiritual borders of faith from the onslaught of numerous enemies seeking to destroy its very foundations. Keeping this in mind, it is the solemn duty of the Islamic Ummah to follow these scholars to fill, to some extent, the vacuum created by the absence of immaculate Leaders.

Despite the fact that *Taqlīd,* or "obeying expert opinion", represents a perfectly valid technique for discovering reality, and even though following the verdicts of academic authorities has always been recognized, by the collective intellect of humanity, as an entirely logical practice, some, in the current era, have cast doubts over the rationality of this process and have, in fact, deemed it to be categorically undesirable. Such individuals have spread their wayward message, especially amongst the youth, by utilizing paralogistic fallacies and fabricating deceptive visions of freedom. Through their extremely suspect methods and arguments, they have successfully created a large body of queries and confusions within the minds of common people.

There is no doubt that this campaign, marked by its malicious character and use of logical fallacies, is being carried out with a clear plan which intends to attack the religious foundations of society. It is, in reality, a systematic effort designed to diminish the respect enjoyed by religious sanctities within the Muslim social order. The orchestrators of this movement aim to deplete the role of religion amongst the masses, thereby relegating it to the sidelines of social life. Clearly the shameless objectives pursued by such persons and groups are completely in line with the goals dreamt up by international hegemonic

powers, who are also the most fanatical enemies of Islam. Their true purpose, through all such activities, is to weaken and eventually eliminate the Islamic system that stands steadfast in its opposition to their imperialist policies. Hence, their actions are not just limited to raising doubts against *Taqlīd*, their strategy openly assaults all facets of religious life and preaches a complete end to what they label as "religion's hindrance of human liberty".

It is within this particular context, and in answer to the duty placed by God Almighty upon religious scholars, that the esteemed Islamic philosopher, Ayatullah Miṣbaḥ Yazdī, began a series of lectures aimed at elucidating the necessity and parameters of *Taqlīd*, or "obeying expert opinion", within human life. These sessions took place during the last ten days of Ramaḍān, in the year 1381 solar hijrah,[1] at the office of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution within the holy city of Qum. The current book is a compilation of these lectures, collected and transcribed by Ḥujjat Al-Islām Karīm Subḥānī. We acknowledge his valuable efforts in this respect, and pray that the current volume be blessed with Almighty God's divine grace, so that it may become a cause of pleasure and joy for the Imam of our Age (as). Similarly, we hope that this work be a source of guidance and satisfaction for all seekers of truth and wisdom everywhere.

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LECTURE ONE
THE RANKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S) AND THE IMMACULATE IMAMS (AS)

The Significance of the Night of Ordainment[1] (*Laylat al-Qadr*)

Tonight, the night of the 21st of the holy month of Ramaḍān,[2] is one of the Nights of Ordainment. In comparison to the 19th of Ramaḍān, tonight bears a far greater probability of being the true Night of Ordainment. As such, and given the grand status which the Holy Qurān ascribes to this night, we should all strive seriously to make the best use of this unique opportunity without wasting even a single second. There may exist individuals who have suspicions about topics found within the discourses of our respected scholars. There might even be people who cast doubts upon certain subjects narrated to us through prophetic traditions. However, any person with even the slightest degree of faith in the Holy Qurān would never entertain any sort of reservation with respect to issues mentioned explicitly within its sacred text. The

1. The term "*Laylat al-Qadr"* has been translated in accordance to the rendition used by Sayyid 'Alī Qulī Qarā'ī in his translation of the Holy Qurān.
2. According to the Islamic calendar, nighttime precedes daytime in a given day. Therefore, a new day actually begins at sunset and not at sunrise.

Night of Ordainment is indeed one such issue. In the Holy Qurān, God Almighty declares in the clearest of terms:

﴿ لَيْلَةُ ٱلْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ﴾

"The Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months."[1]

A thousand months, when calculated, are equal to eighty three complete years and four additional months. According to what God Almighty has stated in the above Qurānic verse, the Night of Ordainment, a single night, holds such magnificence that its worth becomes greater than eighty three long years lacking such a night. Having faith in this reality causes us to spend this extraordinary night engaged in the most worthy of activities.

No doubt, the best of works are those made obligatory upon us by God Almighty. Therefore, if one has lapsed compulsory prayers to perform, or needs to dispense mandatory religious dues such as *Khums* or *Zakāt*, or bears within his wealth assets that rightfully belong to his relatives, neighbors or other people in general, then he must place these matters in priority and relieve himself of these responsibilities as soon as possible. Similarly, if he bears a grudge against one of his brothers, he must try to bury the hatchet immediately and make amends for past follies. Nevertheless, we must remember that one of the most important of our obligations is the act of *Ṭawbah,* through which we sincerely seek repentance from God Almighty for all our sins. We must not, by any means, be oblivious of this crucial fact.

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1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Qadr: 3.

Subsequent to these obligatory tasks, we should also try to perform acts of worship recommended specifically for this honorable night. These include the recitation of the Holy Qurān, reading of narrated supplications found within various religious texts, and whispering one's heartfelt prayers to God Almighty.

From amongst such recommended actions, certain tasks are singled out as bearing a greater degree of reward. Our great sages have informed us of these superior deeds within their various academic writings and discourses. One such instance is the detailed lecture delivered by Shaykh Ṣadūq to his students. In this lecture he explains the fundamental teachings of Shiite Islam, Shaykh Ṣadūq is quoted to have said, "It is our belief that the Night of Ordainment is either the night of the 21st or the 23rd of Ramaḍān, and that worship performed during this night is greater than that performed over a thousand months." In continuation, he says, "It is better to spend these nights engaged in scholarly discussions."[1]

Obviously, by scholarly discussions he meant discussions related to religious topics which take a person closer to Almighty God. Similarly, he probably intended to say that spending these nights in such discussions is far better than spending them in a manner devoid of knowledge and understanding. This would represent a more logical interpretation of his words, because it seems unlikely that such discussions be deemed better than all kinds of worship, even obligatory ones. What he seems to be emphasizing is the need to create an active link between

1. Ṣadūq, *Amālī*, the Persian translation by Ayatollah Kamarehyī, pg. 649.

knowledge and worship. Obviously, worship, coupled with knowledge and understanding, is fundamentally greater in consequence than that performed without these two crucial factors.

Likewise, there exists not a speck of doubt as to the importance of spending this night in remembrance of the martyred leader of the faithful *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* 'Alī ibn Abīṭālib (as). Indeed, staying awake throughout this night in sorrow and lamenting over his sufferings and eventual martyrdom is equal to a thousand months of sincere worship. This is truly one of the best recommended acts that a Muslim can perform within these sacred nights. As such, let me express my heartfelt respect for those individuals busy tonight in commemorating this heartrending tragedy. I truly feel myself humbled by their genuine efforts in this respect, and wish to kiss the hands of each and every one of these people for keeping alive this honorable religious tradition with such enormous passion. However, one must bear in mind that not all our rituals of lamentation have the same value. In fact, there exists a directly proportional relationship between knowledge and the intrinsic value of our actions. Certainly, mourning conducted with superior comprehension of the grand personality, immense struggle and profound teachings of our beloved *Amīr al-Muminīn* (as) will naturally enjoy a greater level of spiritual and intellectual worth. In turn, the influence exerted by such religious rites upon the souls of human-beings will also be far more enhanced, therefore, I would like to dedicate tonight's talk to elucidating the lofty ranks of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as).

The Ranks of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as)

It is Almighty God's divine decree that the Holy Messenger (s) be His final prophet, thus categorically sealing the office of divine prophethood after him. As a result, apart from the rank and office of prophethood, which is exclusive to the Sacred Messenger (s), all other ranks and offices enjoyed by the Holy Prophet (s) are also shared by his immaculate Successors (as). Senior scholars have discussed at length the various divine positions held by both the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as). For instance, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī, in his monumental exegesis of the Holy Qurān, *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, as well as in other books written by him, has shed much light upon this issue. Everything we know in this respect, we have learnt from him. Surely, the years we spent as students under his tutelage are a source of great pride for us. Herein, we would like to honor the memory of this noble and distinguished teacher. We pray to God Almighty, during this hallowed night, to raise his already profound spiritual standing in the Hereafter. May God Almighty grant us the capability to compensate for the painstaking efforts which this great sage invested in our academic and moral guidance. Indeed, the Islamic world, especially the Shiite school of thought, is heavily indebted to the services rendered to them by this illustrious scholar. He revitalized many pivotal teachings of the Islamic and Shiite creed that had remained largely ignored prior to him. Throughout his life, he restlessly toiled to explicate these essential elements of Islam's all-encompassing doctrine. Today the many works of this prolific academic have become essential source material for all researchers

wishing to explore various aspects of Islamic and Shiite belief. In fact, it is absolutely unimaginable to engage in such research work without consulting ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī’s invaluable writings, especially his monumental exegesis of the Holy Quran, *Al-Mizān*.

By using various Qurānic verses and prophetic traditions, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī proved that the Holy Prophet (s) held several different ranks, other than the office of divine prophethood, upon which we will now shed more light.

1. Tafsīr (Qurānic Interpretation); Teacher of Sacred Commandments and Dogma

The Holy Quran is the last heavenly testament revealed by God as clear guidance for all human beings. It fulfills all the needs of mankind, and shall continue to do so until the Day of Judgment. However, it does not contain the comprehensive details of all Islamic laws and doctrine. For instance, we all know that the obligatory daily ritual prayers form an undeniable part of Islam’s most fundamental tenets. The compulsory nature of these ritual acts of worship is a matter of consensus amongst all the Islamic schools of thought. Nevertheless, the Holy Quran does not mention the number of individual units that make up these daily prayers, nor does it inform us about the exact manner in which they must be performed. In reality, it was Almighty God's intention to exclude such particulars from His sacred book, and by doing so He wished to render it readily accessible to all people, making it easy for everyone to memorize, teach and propagate its divine contents. If all such specific details were to be incorporated into Qurānic text, this divine manuscript would end up becoming a hundred volume encyclopedia.

As a result, it would easily become inaccessible for a vast majority of people in the world. In contrast, the current structure of the Holy Quran, with its entirely manageable size, allows all individuals everywhere, even children as young as six or seven, to easily read, utilize and memorize its magnificent text. Now, since the Quran does not carry all these necessary details, the responsibility of elucidating such matters automatically falls upon the shoulders of the Holy Prophet (s) himself. The Quran talks of this responsibility in the following verse:

﴿ وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

"We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect."[1]

The above Qurānic verse explicitly states that God Almighty revealed the Holy Quran Himself, while delegating to His Sacred Messenger (s) the task of its interpretation, as well as the derivation of divine laws from its hallowed pages. If the above verse were not indicative of the Prophet's (s) rank as principle interpreter and supreme exegete of the Holy Quran, and if it simply meant to nominate him as a mere communicator of only the Quran's bare text, then there would have been no need for God to say, "*li Tubayyina li an-Nās*" (that you may clarify for the people). In fact, the phrase "*li Tatluwā*

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Naḥl: 44.

'alayhim" (that you may recite unto then) would have sufficed instead.

Likewise, this very same message is repeated within verse two of the Qurānic chapter *Al-Jumu'ah.* Again, it speaks of the Holy Prophet (s) as being responsible for the interpretation of Qurānic teachings, as well as the explanation of divine law and religious doctrine. It says:

﴿هُوَ ٱلَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى ٱلْأُمِّيِّـۧنَ رَسُولاً مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ لَفِى ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

"It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error."[1]

Within the above Qurānic verse we find two separate words; "*tilāwat*" and "*ta'līm*". These two terms are clearly different from one another, representing two completely dissimilar concepts. "*Tilāwat*" (recitation) is used to signify "*qirāt*" (reading), with just one key difference. The first is normally used to signify the recitation of sacred texts, whereas, the second stands to mean any kind of reading in general. However, "*ta'līm*" (education), herein, signifies the explanation, clarification, exegesis and exposition of semantic intricacies which usually lie beyond the intellectual scope of common individuals, and the precise comprehension of which is not easily achieved.

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Jumu'ah: 2.

Similarly, the same term also means "providing an exhaustive and descriptive interpretation of points which are mentioned only with great brevity within the Holy Quran."

Once Almighty God bestowed upon the Holy Prophet (s) the rank of supreme interpreter and principle exegete of the Holy Quran, and made him responsible for teaching humanity all Islam's laws and instructions, his words and actions came to bear a degree of probative validity similar to the Quran itself. Therefore, all faithful Muslims are duty bound to obey the Sacred Messenger (s) in all that he said and did, be it in explaining the Holy Quran, or in teaching us divine law and Islamic doctrine; every single word uttered by the Holy Prophet (s) stands totally unquestionable in terms of probative validity. This is because of the immaculacy enjoyed by Allah's Messenger (s), which renders his words absolutely immune to all mistakes and inaccuracies. As such, his sayings are entirely coherent with existent reality, and represent precisely the very will of God Almighty. Therefore, when he declares that the obligatory daily prayers consist of seventeen[1] individual units called *rak'ah*, we are immediately obliged to accept his declaration as a message delivered to him by God Almighty, and not a product of his own opinion. Subsequently, we are absolutely prohibited from rejecting his edict or producing another

1. The total units of obligatory prayer that need to be performed during a single day are seventeen in number. Two within the dawn prayer called *Fajr*, four within the noon prayer called *Ẓuhr*, four within the afternoon prayer called *'Aṣr*, three within the evening prayer called *Maghrib*, and four within the night prayer called *'Ishā*.

which represents our own personal judgment in opposition to his.

Nevertheless, even with the special rank granted by God Almighty to His beloved Prophet (s), and despite the numerous traditions narrated to us from the Sacred Apostle (s) and his hallowed Household (as), we still find several differences of opinion amongst the learned scholars and jurisprudents of Islam. Imagine what would have happened if humanity had not been blessed with such immaculate exegetes of the Quran's text and teachings. Undoubtedly, it would have become quite impossible to find even two individuals bearing the same views with respect to the interpretation of this sacred book.

As mentioned earlier, the holy progeny of the Final Messenger (s), referred to as his *Ahl al-Bayt* (as), also hold the above discussed position. They, too, are bestowed with the exalted office of being divinely appointed interpreters of the Holy Quran, and teachers of heavenly law and Islamic doctrine. There exists an overwhelming body of evidence bearing witness to this irrefutable fact. Herein, we shall limit ourselves to mentioning only a single tradition of the Holy Prophet (s) in which he illustrates the grand importance and colossal significance of his *Ahl al-Bayt* (as). The Prophet (s) is narrated to have said, *"Indeed, I leave amongst you two most weighty things, the book of Allah and my family, my Ahl al-Bayt. Surely, these two will never part from one another until they return to me at the pool (of Kawthar in Paradise)."*[1]

The Prophet's (s) emphasis upon the fact that the Holy Quran and his *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) are utterly inseparable,

1. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, volume 2, chapter 14, tradition 59, pg. 100.

clearly indicates that these two are totally consistent with one another and exist in absolute harmony. The words of the Quran and the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) complement one another so perfectly that one cannot find even an iota of disparity between them. If there existed any kind of conflict amongst their respective speeches, separation between the two would immediately become a necessity, and this would contradict the Prophet's (s) unequivocal declaration about the impossibility of any sort of severance between them. Absolute agreement, without even a single exception, is the only way such inseparability can come into being. In fact, the phenomenon under scrutiny is the same as the one that exists between the Holy Quran and the *Sunnah* (or narrated tradition) of the Blessed Prophet (s) himself.

2. Wilāyah and Governance

Another divine office held by the Holy Prophet (s) was that of *Wilāyah,* meaning governance and temporal authority over all people. This position is not a natural consequent of the office of prophethood, since it is possible that a person be a divinely appointed messenger without having temporal and political authority as well. In this case, people shall only be obliged to obey such a person in matters revealed directly by God Almighty. Such an obligation would only represent a duty to abide by Almighty God's commandments, and not those of the prophet per se. Obedience to a certain prophet can only be established if it be compulsory upon people to obey all his commands, even those not mentioned in divine revelation. In turn, such obedience can only come into being if God Almighty chooses to grant one of his messengers the rank

and position of *Wilāyah* and governance. Speaking of this matter, God Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

﴿إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَيُؤۡتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَهُمۡ رَٰكِعُونَ ٥٥ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ فَإِنَّ حِزۡبَ ٱللَّهِ هُمُ ٱلۡغَٰلِبُونَ﴾

"Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down. Whoever takes for his guardians Allah, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of Allah are indeed the victorious."[1]

Numerous narrated traditions tell us that the above Qurānic verse was revealed in praise of Imam ʻAlī (as). The phrase "…*Alladhīna Āmanū*…" (the faithful) within the sentence "…*wa Alladhīna Āmanū Alladhīna Yuqīmūna Al-Ṣalāt*…" (and the faithful who maintain the prayer) is meant to indicate him and none other. From amongst such traditions is the one quoted by ʻAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī, from the book, *Tafsīr al-ʻAyyāshī,* wherein Imam Ḥasan Al-Mujtabā (as) is narrated to have said, "A needy person approached ʻAlī ibn Abīṭālib (as), asking for help while the latter was performing *ruku'* during ritual prayers. ʻAlī took a ring off from his hand and gave it to the person in question. Afterwards, the Prophet of God (s) came and was informed of this matter. At that very moment the verse, *'Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while*

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Mā'idah: 55, 56.

bowing down,' was revealed unto the Holy Prophet (s), which he recited to us."[1]

In the Qurānic verse that follows immediately after the one mentioned above, we find that the *Wilāyah* (or authority) of Almighty God Himself and the one vested within the Sacred Messenger (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as) belongs to one singular genus. Thus, these respective authorities form inseparable links within a single chain of command. The verse in question clearly mentions that people who acknowledge the authority of Almighty God, His Apostle (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as) are all considered as part of the *Hizbullah* (the Party of Allah Almighty). This demonstrates that such people are not subject to three different spheres of authority, but that they are united under the all-encompassing umbrella of Almighty God's divine governance (called *Wilāyatullah*).

In any case, the *Wilāyah* mentioned in the above two verses means the authority and right to govern, through which a person gains the prerogative to enjoin or prohibit, his word becoming law, compulsory for all individuals to obey. This is the authority and power granted by God Almighty to His Final Prophet (s), as well as to the Immaculate Imams (as) who succeeded him, thus making it mandatory upon all Muslims to obey them without question.

In another part of the Holy Quran, God says:

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1. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, volume 6, pg. 18.

﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ﴾

"O' you who have faith, Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you."[1]

This verse is very similar to the one discussed earlier. Again, it serves to demonstrate the authority held by the Holy Prophet (s) and his Immaculate Successors (as), while making it clear that unconditional obedience to them is compulsory upon all people.

An abundant number of prophetic traditions state that the word "*Ūlī al-Amr*" (those vested with authority), used within the above Qurānic verse, stands to signify the Twelve Immaculate Imams (as) from the progeny of the Prophet Muhammad (s). From amongst such traditions is the one narrated upon the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abdullah Al-Anṣārī, a most respected and distinguished companion of the Final Messenger (s). Jābir quotes the Holy Prophet (s) in the following manner: "When the verse '*Yā Ayyuhā Alladhīna Āmanū*…' was revealed by God Almighty to Prophet Muhammad (s), I said: O' Messenger of God, we recognize who God and His Prophet are, but who are the "*Ūlī al-Amr*" (those vested with authority) whom we must also obey? The Prophet replied: O' Jābir, they are my successors, the leaders of the Muslims after me".[2]

It is possible for one to comment, with reference to the verse being analyzed, that the obedience made compulsory

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 59.
2. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, volume 4, pg. 409.

upon all Muslims with respect to the Prophet of God (s) is nothing more than a natural result of his responsibility as conveyor of divine revelation. As such, this obedience does not go beyond the parameter of commandments revealed directly to him by God Almighty, commandments which he is duty bound to transfer to all mankind.

In refuting this idea, it is enough to consider that if such an interpretation were truly valid, there would have been no need for God Almighty to point out three separate sets of obedience within the verse in question. In fact, simply mentioning the obligation to obey God Almighty would have been enough, because such an obligation would not signify anything apart from a compulsory requirement to follow all the commandments and laws revealed by Him, and conveyed to man through His Messenger (s). There would have been no need to indicate another kind of obedience alongside that of Almighty God Himself, and thus no need for any additional phrases such as "*Aṭī'ū Al-Rasūl*" (obey the Apostle). Surely, in such a case, the Prophet (s) would have had no role to play apart from merely transferring messages from God Almighty onto the people. In reality, if we were to accept the proposed hypothesis, obedience of the Prophet (s) would effectively become a meaningless concept.

In addition, acknowledging this theory would mean limiting the Prophet's (s) responsibilities to only one of the several positions mentioned within verse two of the Qurānic chapter *Al-Jumu'ah* i.e. "*tilāwat*" (recitation) or "*qirāt*" (reading) of the Holy Quran's verses. This particular position is only of an intermediary nature, serving simply to transfer Almighty God's revelations onto

His audience within humanity. The obedience related to this specific position represents a kind of obedience rendered only to the original source of such transferred revelations.

However, by incorporating the statement "*Aṭī'ū Al-Rasūl*" (obey the Apostle), Almighty God clearly wishes to convey a much broader meaning. It is an idea greater than the one conveyed simply by the phrase "*Aṭī'ū Allah*" (obey Allah); an idea which the said phrase is incapable of transmitting independently. Indeed, by utilizing this additional clause, God Almighty intends to demonstrate the authority vested by Him in His Sacred Apostle (s), an authority by which the latter gains the right to govern the Islamic community, and by which his unconditional obedience becomes necessary upon all Muslims everywhere. This is the authority which God Almighty grants his selected representatives in order to guide Muslims in matters related to their social and political lives, thereby concentrating temporal power at one focal point and, thus, preventing the emergence of disunity, confusion and chaos. As a result, this individual gains the legal jurisdiction and divine mandate required to emancipate society from the menacing entrapments of political crisis. His judgments effectively steer Muslims away from social pitfalls and, as such, they are religiously obliged to comply fully with his decisions. If this mutual relationship comes into being, society begins to benefit from the limitless bounties that such divinely guided leadership and *Wilāyah* holds in store. Consequently, a healthy and prosperous social system is created, and unity, love and fraternity become commonplace, freed from internal strife and selfish infighting.

In order to successfully survive and flourish, an Islamic society needs to be ruled by the most capable and righteous of individuals, foremost amongst them being immaculate leaders. *Wilāyah* and governance must fall into such able hands, and compliance with their judgment must become a non-negotiable necessity. If their writ be firmly established, one may hope for the continued survival and prosperity of an Islamic system. This is the reason why God Almighty deemed obedience to the Prophet (s), and the Immaculate Imams (as), as the most important religious obligation, second only to the obedience of Almighty God Himself. Imam Ṣādiq (as) is narrated to have said: "Islam is founded upon five things, *Ṣalāt* (ritual prayers), *Zakāt* (obligatory tax upon certain kinds of wealth), *Ṣawm* (fasting), *Ḥajj* (obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca) and *Wilāyah* (divinely ordained authority). None of them are enjoined in a manner (and intensity) comparable to the injunction related to *Wilāyah*. However, people have held on to four and forsaken the fifth, i.e., *Wilayah.*"[1]

Muslims unanimously agree that it is their duty to submit to the Prophet's (as) will without the slightest doubt, and by doing so, they acknowledge wholeheartedly his authority and *Wilāyah*. Yet the pivotal difference which distinguishes Shiite Islam from the other schools of Islamic thought is the matter of the Blessed Prophet's (as) succession. Shiites believe that after the sad demise of the Sacred Messenger (s) his *Wilāyah*, or divinely ordained rulership, passed on by divine decree to the commander of the faithful, 'Alī ibn Abīṭālib (as). Therefore, obedience to

1. *Al-Kāfī*, volume 2, pg. 18.

him became obligatory upon all Muslims just like obedience to the Holy Prophet (s) was obligatory upon them during the latter's lifetime. According to the prophetic tradition narrated by Jābir, as well as many other similar narrations, the Qurānic word *Ūlī al-Amr* stands to signify Imam ‘Alī (as) and the other Immaculate Imams (as) who came after him. Nonetheless, the followers of Sunni Islam reject this understanding. They fail to recognize this reality and believe that no explicit indication of Imam ‘Alī’s (as) *Wilāyah* exists within the Holy Quran’s text. The truth of the matter is that the issue at hand bears grave significance. If a person falls short of identifying the Immaculate Imams (as), thereby denying their authority and the compulsory obedience which it entails, and if he dies in such a state, then indeed he would have died the death of *Jāhilīyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance). This would effectively mean that he failed to gain any benefit from being a Muslim, and that he died in a situation wherein he languished as a disbeliever, utterly devoid of faith. Imam Hasan Al-‘Askarī (as) said: “He, who dies without recognising the Imam of his age, dies the death of *Jāhilīyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance).”[1]

Without doubt, recognising the Imam, as mentioned in the above tradition, does not merely mean knowing his name and the names of his father and mother. In fact, it means that a person must consider the Imam of his age as the only rightful ruler ordained by divine decree, and as such, must strive to obey him without omission. If an individual lacks this critical knowledge, he will find himself trapped and bewildered within the malicious arena of worldly

1. Ibid.

politics, and shall most certainly be abused, like a meager plaything, by pitiless tyrants who seek to exploit him. In summary, the very survival of an Islamic society is invariably linked to the *Wilāyah* and governance of divinely appointed immaculate leaders, or, individuals nominated by them as their representatives in this regard. In the absence of such leadership, an Islamic society could find itself locked within a perilous journey leading only to disaster and annihilation.

Wilāyat al-Faqīh (Rulership of the Jurisprudent)

Herein, we shall briefly talk about Shiite viewpoints regarding the concept of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Rulership of the Jurisprudent), the system which our society is fortunate enough to have implemented. Shiite Muslims believe that the authority and *Wilāyah* of a *faqīh*, or Islamic jurisprudent, is merely another link within the chain of divine governance already discussed above. It is, in reality, a continuation of the position and rank held by the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as). Therefore, it derives its legitimacy directly from the explicit instructions issued by our Immaculate Imams (as) in this respect. During the reign of the commander of the faithful ʻAlī ibn Abīṭālib (as), the territory under Muslim rule had grown to such an extent that it was practically impossible for the Imam (as) to personally manage all the various cities that lay within the boundaries of the Islamic State. On the other hand, the citizens of this expansive state faced a similar problem. Again, it was impossible for all of them to relocate and start living within the city of Kufa, the then seat of the Islamic government. Consequently, it became essential for the Imam (as) to appoint righteous individuals as

authorized representatives in order to administer these different regions in his stead. In answer to this crucial need, he delegated power to deserving and trustworthy people like Mālik al-Ashtar and Muhammad ibn Abībakr, installing them as governors of various Muslim provinces. Even though these appointees lacked immaculacy, obedience to them remained compulsory because their jurisdiction was based upon the appointment of an Immaculate Imam (as). Indeed, an immaculate ruler enjoys divine assignment issued to him directly by God Almighty. As such, someone nominated by an Immaculate Imam (as) as representative also enjoys a similar divine sanction, albeit indirectly.

We are obliged to obey those designated by God Almighty just as we are obliged to obey Him. This is because He declares such individuals to be *Ūlī al-Amr* (those vested with authority) and, thus, proclaims their obedience to be an absolute sine qua non. Indeed, submission to their authority results in submission to His will.

It has now become clear that during the presence of the Immaculate Imams (as), those whom they endowed with authority were to be obeyed unconditionally. Similarly, there exist an ample number of narrated traditions wherein our Immaculate Leaders (as) bestowed the same authority, during the time of their occultation, upon Islamic jurists who fulfilled certain prerequisite conditions (such jurists are technically labeled *Jāmi' al-Sharāyiṭ*). Moreover, having installed these scholars as their rightful heirs, the Immaculate Imams (as) ordered all their followers to obey the commands given to them by the *Walī-i faqīh* (the jurist leader). As a result, the authority wielded by the system of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* simply forms a natural offshoot of the

authority vested by God Almighty in the Immaculate Imams (as); and, therefore, it derives its legitimacy from His divine proclamation and decree, as do the Imams (as) themselves.

Muslims today, who live during the age of occultation, are duty bound to comply with the judgments of such competent Islamic jurists, just as they were obliged to obey all deputies selected personally by the Immaculate Imams (as) during the era of their active presence. The only difference being that nominations made by them personally, during the period of their presence, represent what is called "*al-Naṣb al-Khāṣ*", or "specific nominations", (e.g. the explicit appointment of Mālik al-Ashtar by Imam 'Alī (as)). In contrast, nominations applicable to the era of occultation are called "*al-Naṣb al-'Ām*", or "general nominations", (wherein only the general requirements for eligibility to hold divinely ordained rulership are stated, and if a jurist possesses these traits, he automatically becomes endowed with the legal authority vested by God Almighty in the abovementioned position).

3. Judicial Authority and Supreme Arbitrator

Apart from the ranks of prophethood, *Wilāyah* and leadership, and in addition to being the chief exegete of the Holy Quran, the Sacred Messenger (s) also held, by means of divine appointment, the position of supreme arbitrator and judicial authority within Muslim society. Similarly, the Immaculate Imams (as) were also endowed with this particular designation.

The need for arbitration within society is undeniable. It is through such a system that legal conflicts are successfully

resolved, where qualified judges rule in favor of one party or the other, obliging both sides to comply with their decisions. In such circumstances, one must appreciate that the decisions of the judge are essentially different from those issued by a person holding the rank of *Wilāyah*. A *Walī*, or divinely ordained ruler, does not need to wait for the emergence of conflict in order to intervene in matters of state and public interest, and can thus issue binding directives whenever and wherever he sees fit. In fact, there are times when no such internal social tension exists, but a legitimate ruler, nonetheless, issues commands aimed at safeguarding the sovereignty of a State's ruling system or the fabric of a nation's social order. For instance, a leader may issue orders calling upon the relevant government organs to instigate a defensive or offensive military operation, or he may direct his subordinates to collect taxes in order to furnish the financial needs of his administration. In all such cases, the citizens of a state are duty bound to obey the decisions made by their legitimate ruler.

In contrast, a judge can only intervene in instances wherein a certain legal conflict, between two or more opposing parties, is referred to him for arbitration. As such, his decision only serves to identify which of the disagreeing sides, plaintiff or defendant, is legally correct in its assertions. Sometimes there is no need for a particular person to be formally appointed as judge. In such circumstances, people choose to refer their disputes to a person of their own liking whose credibility and impartiality is recognized by both parties. Within books of Islamic jurisprudence, such an individual is called *Qāḍī al-Taḥkīm* (a judge chosen by the conflicting parties

themselves). However, this ad hoc system lacks effectiveness and fails to be fruitful within most situations, especially because it lacks the ability to implement the decisions taken by such an undesignated judge. It is obviously necessary that judicial positions be vested with a degree of formal legitimacy that may enable them to enforce the decisions taken by them in resolution of a society's internal conflicts of interest. In order to establish the above-mentioned legitimacy, as well as the legal enforceability it generates, a judge must be appointed by divine decree so that obeying his decisions may become obligatory upon the citizens of an Islamic state. In fact, if a judge is appointed by divine proclamation, he derives his authority from God, and is thereby endowed with the ability to successfully resolve a society's legal tussles.

Within the Holy Quran, we find several verses which speak of people being appointed by God Almighty as judges within society:

﴿يَـٰدَاوُۥدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَـٰكَ خَلِيفَةً فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ فَٱحْكُم بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ بِٱلْحَقِّ﴾

"O' David, We have indeed made you a vicegerent on the earth. So judge between people with justice."[1]

Likewise, in one Qurānic verse we find God Almighty addressing the Holy Prophet (s) in the following manner:

﴿إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ بِٱلْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ بِمَآ أَرَىٰكَ ٱللَّهُ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Ṣād: 26.

"Indeed, We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, so that you may judge between the people by what Allah has shown you."[1]

In yet another place, God Almighty emphasizes that people must obey all judgments issued by such legitimate arbitrators:

﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا۟ فِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا۟ تَسْلِيمًا﴾

"But no, by your Lord, they will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission."[2]

In the above-mentioned Qurānic verse, God Almighty employs an unprecedented degree of emphasis rarely seen within Arab literature. In fact, the instance in question is unparalleled even within the Holy Quran's text itself. With such forceful semantic accentuation, God Almighty seeks to highlight the fact that unconditional compliance with all judicial decisions taken by the Holy Prophet (s), in accordance to his position as divinely appointed judge and arbitrator, forms an absolute and nonnegotiable necessity within Islam. The verse goes so far as to declare that once the Prophet (s) issues a judgment, a true Muslim must not entertain even a single speck of reservation, doubt or resent this decision, and wholeheartedly submit to his verdict. He must do so, with total and complete

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 105.
2. The Holy Qurān, Al-Niṣā: 65.

satisfaction, even if the decision in question be entirely detrimental to his personal interests.

Keeping in mind the above discourse, how may we evaluate the faith of an individual who stands defiantly, in most irreverent remonstration, against a totally lawful decision issued by a legitimate Islamic judge, based entirely upon undeniable and concrete evidence, in complete accordance with Islamic rules and principles? Can such blatant defiance against Almighty God's commandments co-exist with sincere submission to His divine will? Is not this rebellion a clear sign of hypocrisy and, indeed, disbelief?

As we have already learnt, God Almighty bestowed upon the Holy Prophet (s) the ranks of supreme Qurānic exegete and principle teacher of Islamic law and doctrine, and made him immaculate so that he would remain safe from all errors while transferring to humanity the knowledge placed at his disposal by God Almighty. As a result, his teachings came to bear absolute probative validity, thereby leaving no room for doubt about the veracity of their contents, and thus compelling all Muslims to act according to them with complete confidence. In the very same manner, God Almighty granted him *Wilāyah* and leadership, as well as judicial authority, endowing his decisions and judgments in all political and legal matters with absolute probative validity. Therefore, He made all of the Prophet's (s) rulings unequivocally binding upon each and every citizen of the Islamic State, and none had the right to question, cast doubt or oppose his verdicts. The Holy Quran says:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥٓ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ ٱلْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَن يَعْصِ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَٰلًا مُّبِينًا﴾

"A faithful man or woman may not, when Allah and His Apostle have decided on a matter, have any option in their matter, and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle has certainly strayed into manifest error."[1]

Once God decides upon a matter through His Blessed Prophet (s) none have the right to oppose the judgment, nor express alternative points of view about the issue at hand. Concepts like freedom of choice, self-determination, or final decision-making through popular vote, are utterly inadmissible within such a situation. Even the Prophet (s) himself has absolutely no say when it comes to Almighty God's commandments and injunctions.

We have already mentioned within our earlier discussion that the Immaculate Imams (as) hold all the positions held by the Holy Prophet (s) with the exception of the office of prophethood. Consequently, one of the ranks is that of supreme judicial authority and divinely appointed arbitrator.

There are numerous prophetic traditions which clearly indicate the transfer of the Blessed Messenger's divinely ordained ranks to his first immaculate successor, Imam 'Alī (as). Amongst them is the famous tradition known as *Hadīth al-Manzilah* (or "the tradition of status"). Keeping

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Aḥzāb: 36.

in mind that the Immaculate Imams (as) are all manifestations of a singular heavenly reality, any positions transferred to the first of them (i.e. Imam ʻAlī) would automatically be transferred to all of them without exception.

Prophet Muhammad (s) is quoted to have articulated the following sentence in praise of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* ʻAlī ibn Abīṭālib (as) time and time again: "Your (status) to me is the status Hārūn had with relation to Mūsā, except that there is no prophet after me."[1]

Similarly, Imam ʻAlī (as) in one of his renowned sermons called *al-Khutbah al-Qāṣi'ah* describes his unparalleled relationship with the Sacred Messenger (s), highlighting the position he enjoyed in the latter's opinion. Within this sermon he quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as having said: "Surely you hear what I hear, and see what I see, except that you are not a prophet. However, you are indeed a minister, and indeed you are upon righteousness."[2]

Whenever the angel Jibrāyīl (or Gabriel) descended down upon the Blessed Messenger (s), addressing him on behalf of God Almighty and revealing unto him the hallowed words of divine revelation, *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* ʻAlī ibn Abīṭālib (as) would also be present and would hear, word for word, the speech of this archangel. However, the addressee and intended audience within this heavenly conversation was exclusively the Sacred Prophet (s) alone; and ʻAlī (as) would only be there as a mere onlooker. Herein, a greater degree of explanation is required. Sometimes two people talk to one another, conveying to

1. *Al-Kāfī*, volume 8, pg. 106.
2. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 192.

each other their intended messages, while a third person sits listening to their conversation without being an active part. Likewise, there are occasions when an individual brings a message meant for a certain person, while delivering it to him in front of other people. As a result, everyone in attendance hears this message, even though only one particular person is the actual addressee.

Different Kinds of Waḥī (Revelation)

At this point we are faced with a couple of questions. When the Final Prophet (s) bade farewell to this mortal abode, did the phenomenon of *Waḥī* (or revelation) also end with his demise? Subsequent to this sad event, did all kinds of communication between human beings and Almighty God's trusted archangel Jibrāyīl cease to exist? Was *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (as) still able to see and talk with this heavenly being? Was Fāṭimah al-Zahrā (as) also able to meet and converse with him?

According to definitive proof available to us within narrated traditions, the answer to the last three of the above four queries is a categorical "yes". However, this does not mean that Imam 'Alī (as) or Fāṭimah al-Zahrā (as) were prophets. We must understand that messages brought to other beings by various angels, chief amongst them Jibrāyīl, are not all the same in nature. Fundamentally, there exist several types of revelations. Within a very basic categorization, divine revelations can be classified into two broad groups: "prophetic revelations" and "non-prophetic revelations".

Revelation that exclusively addresses a prophet, and cannot be received by anyone lacking this divinely ordained position, is called "prophetic revelation".

Nevertheless, a prophet can receive "non-prophetic revelations" as well. Within our own culture, "non-prophetic revelation" is also called *Ilhām* (or "supernatural inspiration"). However, in traditions narrated to us from the Immaculate Imams (as), this type of revelation is dubbed *Taḥdīth.* When we study the book Uṣūl al-Kāfī, we find within it a chapter titled, "*Anna al-Aimmah Muḥaddathūn Mufahhamūn"* (Surely, The Imams are Communicated With and Informed). The late Kulaynī (r) dedicated this chapter to narrating traditions which demonstrate the active communication which existed between Almighty God's angels and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as). Incidentally, one of the honorific epithets of Fāṭimah al-Zahrā (as) is the title *Muḥaddathah*, meaning "a woman with whom angels speak". Uninformed individuals, who do not know the correct meaning of the word *Muḥaddath*, often confuse it with the word *Muḥaddith* ("someone who narrates traditions"). As such, they come to believe that the appellation in question seeks to venerate the Immaculate Imams (as) for their role in narrating prophetic traditions. Obviously, such a virtue is not something exclusive to our Imams (as), since there have always existed other people who were respected for narrating the Holy Prophet's (s) traditions.

During the Quran's initial descent, unique terms had not yet been coined to signify the different types of revelations, and the word *Ilhām* (supernatural inspiration) was not yet recognized as a distinct concept in opposition to *Waḥī* (revelation), Arabs only utilized the word *Waḥī* within its original, literal meaning. As such, the word was universally used to denote "any instantaneous and hidden transfer of messages." Obviously, this meaning was broad

enough to include all the diverse forms of revelations; be they prophetic in nature, or mere flashes of inspiration, or even voices of instinctual disposition. For instance, the following Qurānic verse speaks of *Waḥī* with reference to the honeybee. Within such usage, the word in question stands to signify the instincts inbuilt into animals by Almighty God.

﴿ وَأَوۡحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى ٱلنَّحۡلِ أَنِ ٱتَّخِذِي مِنَ ٱلۡجِبَالِ بُيُوتٗا وَمِنَ ٱلشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعۡرِشُونَ ﴾

"And your Lord inspired the bee [saying]: 'Make your home in the mountains, and on the trees and the trellises that they erect. Then eat from every [kind of] fruit and follow meekly the ways of your Lord."[1]

In other Qurānic verses, the very same word is employed to indicate an act carried out by human beings, e.g. the Holy Quran speaks of the prophet Zakarīyā (as) as being a source of *Waḥī*. Herein, the said word is used to mean "a kind of communication that takes place through sign language".

"So he emerged before his people from the Temple, and signaled to them that they should glorify [Allah] morning and evening."[2]

Similarly, the Holy Quran informs us about the descent of *Waḥī* upon two pious and worthy women; one of them being Maryam (as), and the other, the mother of Mūsā (as). This sort of *Waḥī* was definitely not prophetic

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Naḥl: 68.
2. The Holy Qurān, Maryam: 11

in nature. In Maryam's (as) case, one of Almighty God's select angels appeared before her in order to fulfill a specific divine mission, whereas, that which transpired for the mother of Mūsā (as) was an explicit instance of intuitional inspiration caused by a supernatural source.

The story of Maryam (as), as related to us by the Holy Quran, tells us about how this blessed lady sought solitude within a lonely corner of Jerusalem so that she could immerse herself in sincere worship. One day, as she was silently praying within this secluded quarter, there appeared before her a mysterious being in human form:

﴿ فَٱتَّخَذَتۡ مِن دُونِهِمۡ حِجَابٗا فَأَرۡسَلۡنَآ إِلَيۡهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرٗا سَوِيّٗا ١٧ قَالَتۡ إِنِّيٓ أَعُوذُ بِٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ مِنكَ إِن كُنتَ تَقِيّٗا ١٨ قَالَ إِنَّمَآ أَنَا۠ رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَٰمٗا زَكِيّٗا ١٩ قَالَتۡ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَٰمٞ وَلَمۡ يَمۡسَسۡنِي بَشَرٞ وَلَمۡ أَكُ بَغِيّٗا ﴾

"Thus did she seclude herself from them, whereupon We sent to her Our Spirit and he became incarnate for her as a well-proportioned human. She said, 'I seek the protection of the All-beneficent from you, should you be God-fearing!' He said, 'I am only a messenger of your Lord that I may give you a pure son.' She said, 'How shall I have a child seeing that no human being has ever touched me, nor have I been unchaste?"[1]

Qurānic exegetes differ with one another as to the true identity of this *Rūḥ* (or spirit). Some believe it to be the

1. The Holy Qurān, Maryam: 17-20.

archangel Jibrāyīl, while others consider it to be one of Almighty God's other glorified angels. Whatever the truth may be, one thing is positively certain; that which appeared before Maryam (as) was indeed a heavenly apparition, manifesting itself in human form in order to convey to her a *Waḥī,* a divine message. Subsequently, and by Almighty God's immutable will, Maryam (as) found herself to be pregnant without ever having experienced any sort of male contact.

Similarly, the *Waḥī* sent down by God Almighty upon the mother of Mūsā (as) forms a part of another Qurānic account. According to the Holy Quran's narration, the Pharaoh of Egypt had a dream which left him greatly unsettled. Upon demanding an interpretation from his priests, he was told that a boy will soon be born to the tribe of Banī-Isrā'īl. This boy, they declared, was destined to topple the Pharaoh's throne. In order to preemptively stop such an occurrence from taking place, the Egyptian tyrant ordered that every newborn male belonging to this tribe be immediately slaughtered. As a result, his agents began seeking out and killing male infants without mercy. It was within such a terrifying situation that Mūsā's (as) mother gave birth to a baby boy. Contemplating the prospect of him being murdered at the Pharaoh's behest filled her heart with dreadful fear. While she anxiously pondered upon how to save her newborn child, God Almighty suddenly showed her a way out of this apparently inescapable dilemma. The Holy Quran speaks of this divinely guided inspiration in the following manner:

﴿ وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي ٱلْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِيٓ ۖ إِنَّا رَآدُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴾

"We revealed to Moses' mother, [saying], 'Nurse him; then, when you fear for him, cast him into the river, and do not fear or grieve, for We will restore him to you and make him one of the apostles."[1]

The last portion of the above verse indicates that actions carried out by Mūsā's (as) mother were under the direction of divine instruction. How else could she have known that her son would eventually be returned to her.

The entirety of the discussion above was meant to clarify, from the viewpoint of the Holy Qurān, that the phenomenon of *Waḥī* or revelation is not exclusive to Almighty God's chosen prophets. In fact, apart from prophetic revelation, there exist other forms of communication between the heavenly realm and this temporal world. The Immaculate Imams (as) were also the recipients of such non-prophetic revelation. The Holy Spirit or Jibrāyīl would appear and speak to them in order to bring them Almighty God's messages. However, these messages did not, in any way or form, mean that these individuals were Almighty God's prophets. Thus, we understand that the angel Jibrāyīl would reveal himself, sometimes even in human form, to people other than divine prophets. History records him doing so when he

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Qaṣaṣ: 7.

appeared as a youngster named Daḥiyah Kalbī who was from amongst the companions of the Holy Prophet (s). Similarly, he presented himself in human attire to the blessed Maryam (as), as well as to the Immaculate Imams (as).

Having glanced through the hallmarks mentioned within the Ahl al-Bayt's (as) narrated traditions with regard to prophetic revelation, and knowing that Prophet Muhammad (s) is indeed the Seal of Almighty God's prophets, we come to understand that all prophetic revelation ceased to continue after him. Nevertheless, based on the Holy Qurān and narrated traditions, we see that people other than Almighty God's chosen messengers were able to see and converse with Jibrāyīl and receive from him Almighty God's various messages. The Immaculate Imams (as) were from amongst such people and would sometimes see Jibrāyīl, while, on other instances, would only hear his voice.

4. Tazkiyah (Spiritual Purification) and Tarbiyat (Training)

We have discussed three of the ranks bestowed upon the Sacred Messenger (s) by God Almighty and passed on to the Immaculate Imams (as). Apart from these ranks, we are told of other lofty positions that he enjoyed. However, there are *other* positions which were not granted exclusively to him. Probably the most important of such positions is the rank of purification and training. The Almighty speaks of these two ranks within the Holy Qurān right next to the ranks of *Ta'līm* (Teaching) and *Tafsīr* (Qurānic Interpretation), and counts them from amongst the great objectives of divine prophets.

﴿ هُوَ ٱلَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى ٱلۡأُمِّيِّـۧنَ رَسُولاً مِّنۡهُمۡ يَتۡلُواْ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمۡ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلۡكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلۡحِكۡمَةَ وَإِن كَانُواْ مِن قَبۡلُ لَفِى ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

"It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error."[1]

As mentioned earlier, *Ta'līm* or teaching the Book and Wisdom pertains to educating people in the Qurān's correct interpretation, the truths of existence, the details regarding divine commandments and laws, and the hidden depths of Almighty God's revealed book. These tasks cannot be carried out by any ordinary individual. Indeed, only a true teacher of the Qurān, someone whose holy soul and hallowed heart form the chosen vessels for its descent and residence, can seek to perform these actions. On the other hand, *Tazkiyah* (purification) represents a form of spiritual, moral and ethical edification. This edification is sometimes individual in nature, meaning that a person comes into contact with a trainer and, through his guidance, is able to achieve internal purity. At other times, it may take onto itself a more communal form wherein an entire group is influenced by the instructions of a certain trainer and people within the said group benefit from these directions according to their own varying potentials.

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Jumu'ah: 2.

When the Qurān speaks of this particular rank of the Sacred Messenger (s) with such emphasis, the vital importance of spiritual purification becomes clearly known. Unfortunately, we find ourselves ignorant of this task, while focusing all our efforts towards the attainment of knowledge instead. The plain truth is that even if, hypothetically, we were able to gather together all the knowledge related to all the numerous sciences and fields of learning (a task possible only to the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as)) we would still find such knowledge of little or no use to ourselves, or to others, unless it be accompanied by moral purity and ethical excellence. In fact, the presence of ethical and spiritual vices such as avaricious ambition and a lustful thirst for power can actually transform this knowledge into a source of destruction and malice.

Knowledge is definitely valuable, but not indefinitely so! In fact, it loses all its value once it exists devoid of spiritual purity. Satan has lived with humanity since its very inception and has, therefore, accumulated unparalleled knowledge and experience stretching over centuries, apart from the knowledge he already possessed before Ādam (as) was created. However, this knowledge, with its immense magnitude, fails to provide him with even an ounce of worth. Similar is the case of the hypocrites and other insincere people who lived with the Holy Prophet (s), and benefited from his teachings, but to no avail. The truth is that their special position caused them to fall into even greater depths of destruction with their place being in the worst parts of Hellfire. The real reason of their downfall was their lack of spiritual purification.

The only type of knowledge that can take us into the proximity of God Almighty, and therefore be considered worthwhile, is knowledge that comes intertwined with spiritual purity and practical piety. Spiritual purification and training work to cement the presence of divine grace and mercy which Almighty God's prophets seek to spread amongst humanity. Without these two key factors, knowledge is not only useless, but is indeed perilously dangerous. As a result, the absence of these key elements from our personal or collective lives is equal to paving the way for Satan's hegemony upon ourselves.

Such was this position of the Holy Prophet (s) that was passed on to his immaculate progeny or Ahl al-Bayt (as) once he ascended from this temporal plain towards the everlasting heavenly one.

Herein, we find it necessary to mention a certain point. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, when the martyrs Rajā'ī and Bāhunar were President and Prime Minister respectively, the latter of the two started a unique initiative. They introduced a directorate for edification and training within the ministry of education. This directorate and the works it performed led to a number of praiseworthy events. However, in the present time there exist certain elements who, because of ill information or even ill intent, seek to remove this division all together, which can have no result apart from throwing the doors open for hypocrites to dance into the very infrastructure that is charged with the nurturing of our future generations. This, in turn, would lead to the spread of immoral behavior within our schools and colleges. We must warn government officials that they must not take the issue of moral and ethical training lightly, and that it is

dangerous to remain aloof from the pivotal significance that such training holds. Any proposed removal of the office of ethical training would practically result in a removal of ethical guidance itself.

LECTURE TWO
TAQLĪD, ITS STATUS AND NECESSITY

The Nature of *Tazkiyah* (Spiritual Purification) and *Tarbīyat* (Training)

The main subject that we are exploring within our discussion is that of *Tazkiyah* (Spiritual Purification) and *Tarbīyat* (Training). Although these two notions are conceptually close to one another, the first of them carries an additional degree of meaning. *Tarbīyat*, or training, means to provide the grounds for a trainee's development and facilitate a complete blossoming of his or her potentials. Whenever a gardener plants a seed and, subsequently, dedicates himself to care for it meticulously, providing it with water and allowing it to achieve a sufficient measure of sunlight, he is in fact indulging in its *Tarbiyat*. Additionally, sometimes a trainer may not just limit himself to furnishing the external requirements of a trainee, so as to make it totally conducive for proper growth, but might even interfere with the trainee's internal world in order to achieve the said goals. For instance, our gardener may not just stop after providing adequate irrigation and fertilizer, he might also allow himself to clip away any and all waywardly growing branches and leaves, or remove certain obstacles from our seedling's path. Attempts, to remove impediments, internal and external, is called *Tazkiyah*. Therefore, *Tazkiyah* involves a removal of any and all factors that, when found in ample amount, can significantly diminish the quantity or quality of any given product.

These two words are sometimes also used to signify the process employed when nurturing plants and animals. Since plants and animals do not have an intellect and lack the ability to choose or refuse intelligently (or possess it in such minimal degrees that we cannot consider them creatures of free-will), they are in no real position to willfully accept or reject the training they are being offered. On the other hand, when used for humans, these concepts signify a process in which an intelligent being intentionally allows itself to be tutored and carefully developed. As such, in human beings, *Tazkiyah* and *Tarbīyat* cannot take place without the active involvement of the trainee in question. Resultantly, a trainer not only needs to arrange the physical elements necessary for proper growth, but he or she is presented with the challenge of having to create conditions that shall lead the said trainee to demand this growth and rise towards goodness based on his or her own self-realization and free-will.

Building upon these same points, if the trainee is a human, then because humans are intelligent beings, the trainer needs to incorporate elements of *Ta'līm* into the process. This means that he must engage in giving the person new information that will aid him or her in the developmental journey. This is the intersection between *Ta'līm* and *Tarbīyat*.

A *Mu'allim* or teacher is only tasked with providing a student with information and knowledge, and is not concerned with the said student's ethical, moral and spiritual training.

In contrast, a *Murabbī* or trainer tends to the latter of these tasks exclusively and is not entrusted with carrying out the first.

This, therefore, defines the difference between these two affairs. Obviously, a teacher may also simultaneously be a trainer and, thus, may act in both capacities, performing both kinds of duties.

There also exists another difference between *Ta'līm* and *Tarbīyat* which has to do with the elements of exercise, repetition and application. People often receive pieces of information but are unable to employ them successfully in practical circumstances. The employment of such ideas in practical life requires a certain degree of practice and controlled application. To explain this concept further, we need to appreciate that certain types of knowledge is only theoretical in nature and lacks any real world use. All that is needed with reference to this type of data is to comprehend and then memorize it. On the other hand, there exists another category of knowledge which is characterized by its practical applicability. As such, it is not enough for us to simply understand and memorize the concepts involved but we need to take a step further and actually put the said concepts to use. For this purpose, students are expected to polish their skills at employing this kind of information in real life scenarios. Apart from learning the ideas in question and providing the theoretical framework needed to understand and later use the data made available, they are also required to practice the actual usage of the said concepts to the point that it becomes an acquired skill. For instance, if a person wishes to become a driver, it will not be considered enough for him to have attended a few classes or have memorized the

traffic code and other related manuals. He will indeed be asked to sit behind a steering wheel and put his newly attained knowledge to task. Only after having gone through a rigorous practical training course will he be allowed to drive on public roads. Therefore, we now fully see that theoretical knowledge and practical skill are two very different things. A *Murabbī* or trainer bears the burden of providing a trainee with an environment where he or she may be able to put his or her theoretical know-how to practical use. For this purpose, the trainer may need to create practice scenarios or furnish the trainee with pieces of applicative examples etc., in order to equip him or her for a successful employment of the knowledge they currently hold in their minds.

Therefore, the *Tarbīyat* and *Tazkīyah* of a human being involve a great degree of complexity and require a large amount of expertise. The full scale of these proficiencies is known only to God Almighty. Since He created man and only He holds complete knowledge of his potentials and short-comings, it is only He who can tell us the correct and proper manner for His creation's education and purification. He has taught this correct path to His messengers, prophets and chosen ones so that they may use this divinely granted knowledge to aid humanity rise towards a holistic development. However, since human beings are creatures of free-will, they may choose to rebel against their own interests, walk a path contrary to progress, and they may choose do so even though all the right conditions and teachings are made available to them. Human beings can only rise to realize their own full potential, by taking heed of divine teachings and utilizing ripe circumstances, if they truly will to do so.

The Ideal Role-Model for Human Training

There is a large canvas of discussion that deals with the factors needed by a trainer in order to do his job successfully. However, there exists a consensus amongst the experts of this field when it comes to one particular factor. They all agree that the most effective tool of training is to provide a trainee with a correct model of what must be achieved. On the other hand, one may argue that it would be even better if the trainer himself were a practical manifestation of that very ideal. If he held in his own entity the lofty characteristics that he hoped to cultivate within his trainee, his would indeed be the best possible situation imaginable. Nevertheless, if such a perfect scenario were not available, the trainer must seek to introduce his trainee to an ideal figure that epitomizes the goal that the said trainee seeks to attain. When the great teachers of Islamic ethics and the sages of *Akhlāq* emphasize that a person must seek out for himself a teacher and practitioner of moral purification, they do so because they fully understand the influence that such an example can have on the student in question. In following a teacher of Islamic ethics, a student is not simply meant to receive certain instructions from his sage, but must observe the sage's practical manners and ways of life in order to make them an example to be followed in his own personal life.

If a person wishes to be an ideal role model for others to follow, any inkling of error in his words or actions, or even a speck of weakness in his character would effectively undermine his or her ability to train others. For this very reason, God Almighty blessed humanity by sending them a series of immaculate leaders; leaders who

were free of all fault, and who embodied the epitome of excellence. This is the reason why God in the Holy Qurān emphasizes the role of His sacred prophets, especially the Prophet Muhammad (s), as being the *Uswah* or ideal role model for humanity. The greatest service that can be rendered to those seeking training is to present them with such perfect role models. As such, the hallowed entity of the Holy Prophet (s) is unique in all dimensions and, thus, represents an utterly unparalleled gift of the Almighty to human kind. Not only does he carry divine revelation and enjoy the highest ranks of spiritual ascension, but God Almighty has also created him as a human being and rendered him totally free of sin and error. Consequently, he stands as the best possible role model for all people and they can rise towards prosperity and ultimate success through emulating his flawless actions and character. It is here that we, the Shī'ah, find ourselves particularly blessed. We are the only school of thought from amongst the Islamic schools of thought who enjoy not one but fourteen such infallible role models. Apart from the unsurpassed self of the Holy Messenger (s), the blessed lady Fāṭimah al-Zahrā (as), the Immaculate Imams (as) from his sacred progeny are also available to us to follow as perfect ideals. By bestowing upon us these fourteen flawless examples of perfection, God Almighty completed His divine blessings upon all of humanity.

The best way to utilize Almighty God's priceless gift is to practically emulate the actions, manners and characteristics of His sacred apostles. In order to do this, we need to study, in meticulous detail, how these personalities behaved in every role within their individual and social lives. Having understood their ways and

manners, we must follow their example in all the fields and dimensions of our own existences. However, the instant we begin to do so, certain malicious elements will try to pollute our minds with a myriad of doubts, trying to spirit us away from the path of prosperity. So it stands to reason that we should first try to inoculate our intellects against such wicked attacks, save ourselves, pre-emptively, from being deprived of Almighty God's greatest blessings. Based on this reasoning, and in order to dispel the most common arguments, we shall now dwell further into "how one must choose a role-model" and the question of "emulation" or why one must follow others.

The Holy Qurān and Following Rightly-Guided Individuals

First of all, words from the English language like "role-model" etc. are obviously alien to the Islamic tradition and classical texts. The proper Arabic and Islamic terms we need to study in this regard are those present within the Qurān and Islamic culture. When we look at these primary sources, we are faced with the words *Uswah*, *Iqtadā* and *Qudwah*, wherein the second and the third are derived from a common root form.

In the Holy Qurān, after having mentioned a number of His sacred prophets alongside their deeds and merits, God Almighty uses the second of these terms and declares:

﴿أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۖ فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ... ﴾

"They are the ones whom Allah has guided. So follow their guidance…"[1]

In this Qurānic verse, God Almighty reminds us that He guided and trained the prophets and that we are obliged and duty-bound to do *Iqtadā* to them i.e. follow them. This means that these chosen personalities achieved the status of becoming role-models under the grace and divine tutelage of God Almighty and, thus, came to deserve obedience. As a result, we are commanded to follow them. "Following them" signifies that we must take them to be the standard of correct behavior in all fields of life.

Another word commonly seen is *Ta'assī* or emulation. Yet another, seen in the Holy Qurān, is the term *Itabā'* or obedience. While possessing all the denotative baggage, conveyed by the terminologies discussed earlier, this word commands an even wider semantic parameter because it indicates obedience not only in action and speech but also in thought and belief.

While using one of the inflective forms of the said term, The Holy Qurān quotes Ibrāhīm (as) as having said:

﴿يَٰٓأَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدۡ جَآءَنِي مِنَ ٱلۡعِلۡمِ مَا لَمۡ يَأۡتِكَ فَٱتَّبِعۡنِيٓ أَهۡدِكَ صِرَٰطٗا سَوِيّٗا ﴾

"Father, indeed, knowledge has already come to me, which has not come to you. So follow me that I may guide you to a right path."[2]

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-An'ām: 90.
2. The Holy Qurān, Maryam: 43.

There are two points to note in the above Qurānic verse. Firstly, Ibrāhīm (as) calls Āzar his "father" whereas Āzar was actually Ibrāhīm's (as) paternal uncle. This is a show of respect, love and compassion on Ibrāhīm's (as) behalf. The narrated conversation occurred when Ibrāhīm (as) was merely a young man and Āzar, in his ripe old age, bore the responsibility of being his guardian. The Qurān quotes them as they disagree with one another about worshiping man-made idols or the one true God. During this debate, Ibrāhīm (as) takes into account Āzar's role as his guardian and addresses him, as courtesy commands, with the noblest of titles that one can bestow upon an elder by way of love. This is similar to when old people address youngsters as their "sons" or "daughters" even if they bear no real relationship to the young people in question. They do this simple as a sign of kindness and sympathy.

The second point to take into consideration is that Ibrāhīm (as) successfully argued against his uncle's beliefs and proved them to be utterly wrong using fool-proof logic. At the same time he argued in favor of his own convictions and proved them to be correct. In the end, he declared that because he had discovered truths that can lead people to prosperity and since Āzar remained deprived of this knowledge, thus remaining ignorant of what may or may not be in his own best interests, the latter must choose to follow the first so that he may lead him to salvation. In fact, Ibrāhīm's (as) invitation was a universal invitation. His invitation stated that all those who do not know should follow those who do know. In other words, all uninformed people must follow and emulate the scholars and other well-informed individuals who recognize truth from falsehood and, thus, can lead them to the path of guidance.

This invitation is, in fact, the most natural and intellectually sound idea that can ever be articulated.

Taqlīd (or Emulation) Viewed by *'Aql* and *Fiṭrah*

Whenever a certain individual is recognized as being an expert in a particular field, it is only natural for people who bear insufficient knowledge within that given field of study to accept and follow his opinion and decisions. In fact, scholars, all over the world throughout history, regardless of caste, creed or culture, unanimously acknowledge the referral authority of the expert in all such cases. Therefore, whenever we desire a certain kind of knowledge, or need a certain science or know-how, we go looking for people who already bear this knowledge, are well-versed in the said science and proficient in the given skills. It is from them that we get our answers and, in doing so, we utilize their expertise.

If someone is ill, he or she will naturally seek out a doctor so as to find a cure to his or her ailment. Similarly, someone who wants a house or any other building built will automatically go looking for an architect in order to develop a blue-print for the project and then have it executed. As we can see, referring one's problems to experts within a given field signifies the most natural of acts. It is so logical that it requires no prior training or instruction. People do it instinctively. There is no need for anyone to explain to a sick person why he requires a doctor. He or she understands this completely and comprehends that he or she has no choice but to seek expert medical help.

Based on the concept elucidated upon above, people who have little knowledge of the duties levied upon them by religion, or have no understanding of the commandments and laws that religion dictates, must, by way of the same natural and logical system of affairs discussed earlier, seek out an expert in these matters and follow his authoritative opinion. These experts will obviously need to be people who are academically trained and enjoy the highest degree of learning in religious and doctrinal sciences. In the Islamic tradition, the terminology used for such experts is *Mujtahid* (someone having attained the academic level of *Ijtihād* i.e. jurisprudential authority) or *Faqīh* (someone having *Fiqāhah* or a deep and profound understanding of Islam). Once having located such an expert, the layman is obliged to obey his edicts with reference to religious matters. Having understood this we realize that even before dwelling into the narrated traditions and jurisprudential proofs that speak of the legitimacy of this matter, our minds are able to draw a conclusive verdict all by themselves. In truth, the necessity of laymen referring to the *Fuqahā* (plural of *Faqīh*) is a mere instance of the universal principle discussed thus far; a universal principle that enjoys the indisputable acknowledgment of all intellectuals and scholars everywhere. Furthermore, every logically sound individual would tell you that if a layman were to fail in referring a given issue to its relevant expert and, as a result of this failure, if he were to make a mistake or partake in an error, then he would find him or herself deserving of rebuke.

Applying the same idea, if a person had the ability to refer to the *Fuqahā* and had their verdicts at his disposal but, nevertheless, chose to act in a stubborn manner by

following his own ill-informed opinions on matters related to religious doctrine and duties, then in case of error he would only have himself to blame and be deserving of punishment. He would have no justification for his actions in front of God Almighty.

Therefore, the idea that it is necessary for laymen to refer to experts is a natural and most logical principle. However, these experts may sometimes respond to queries orally, while at other times they may prefer or find it better to respond in writing; both methods being equally valid.

Psychologists and sociologists have spoken in detail about the importance of *Taqlīd* or emulation in human life. One such scholar of social psychology was Gabriel Tarde.[1] He believed that the most influential force compelling a person to accept a certain cultural norm was the force of imitation. If it weren't for the power of imitation, people would never learn languages to speak or scripts to write and read. As a result, we would have been unable to communicate with one another and, worse still, would have found ourselves stripped bare of all our cultural and intellectual heritage brought down to us from our ancestors through recorded texts and spoken words. If imitation were not at play, each generation of human beings would have had to start from zero in each and every field of individual and social life. Thus, imitation signifies the force that allows the intellectual heritage and accumulated experiences of our forefathers to be passed on to our future generations. On the other hand, if we were deprived of these intellectual resources, and were forced to

1. Jean-Gabriel De Tarde or Gabriel Tarde (12 March 1843 – 13 May 1904).

literally "reinvent the wheel", and everything else for that matter, civilization would never have progressed to where it has reached today. In short, the primary or, some may claim, the only factor responsible for the transfer of knowledge and experience from one human generation to the subsequent one is imitation.

This point of view is, nevertheless, a bit extreme. We do not believe that imitation and emulation, i.e. *Taqlīd*, form the only elements responsible for man's social maturity. It is, however, a crucial factor that cannot be ignored. As such, no one can ever decide not to emulate anyone in any portion of his or her life. If a child does not learn language and speech from his or her parents, how can he or she possibly hope to communicate normally? Or if a child decides not to learn reading and writing from his or her school teachers, then how can he or she possibly hope to read or write in the future? This pattern of queries will go on until we reach the most fundamental set of skills necessary in human life; skills that may come into play during situations of life and death. For instance, if someone falls critically ill and refuses to submit him or herself to the directions of a physician, that person will surely find his or her life span seriously reduced.

The Qurān Invites People to Follow the Rightly-Guided and Stay Away from the Deviant

While speaking about the importance of following rightly-guided people and reprimanding anyone who chooses to follow undeserving leaders, the Holy Qurān says:

﴿ أَفَمَن يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلۡحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لَّا يَهِدِّيٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُهۡدَىٰۖ فَمَا لَكُمۡ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُونَ ﴾

"Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is not guided unless shown the way? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?"[1]

The content of this Qurānic verse encompasses all facets of human life. It applies to jurisprudential, religious and ethical matters as well as social, political and economic ones. One method that God Almighty uses to transfer His message of truth to us is the natural process of inquiry. This is amply present in the Qurānic text. Especially in places that a clear truth has been denied by people, God Almighty uses this particular methodology to jolt their consciences and intellects back into proper position. He presents them with a question whose answer is so obvious that their minds have no choice but to accept the truth and turn away from stubborn denial. In the verse quoted above, God Almighty asks whether a person truly seeking guidance should follow someone guided by God Himself, an individual who is rightly-guided and enjoys the ability to guide others, or should he follow and emulate a person who has no guidance and does not know the truth, let alone have the ability to lead others to it? Faced with such a straight-forward question, the human intellect is left with no choice but to select the correct answer. Most certainly, given the situation in question, the unprejudiced natural logic of one's mind dictates that he or she should only

1. The Holy Qurān, Yūnus: 35.

follow a rightly-guided teacher, and steer clear of all ignorant individuals.

One of the clearest instances of such ignorant people, totally divorced from the truth, are the so-called liberal thinkers of our time who seek to cast doubt in everything and, indeed, take great pride in their ignorant skepticism. Should we obey and emulate the prophets and saints of God Almighty who know the truth and guide others to it with utter certainty, or blindly follow a bunch of misguided individuals who have no asset in their intellectual armory apart from doubt? However, modern day skeptics try to rationalize their bankrupt ideas by claiming that humans have no way to accessing truth, even if such a thing did exist. They propose that "certainty" is nothing but a façade, and that "certain knowledge" can never be achieved. Epistemological discussions aside, such people cannot guide anyone towards anything simply because any attempt to do so would be contradictory to their own convictions. They, by way of confession, render themselves totally incapable of guiding anyone anywhere.

Desired *Taqlīd* and Unacceptable *Taqlīd*

It has become clear that persons who find themselves devoid of sufficient knowledge refer to experts in whatever matter they may be dealing with. Particularly, in matters related to religion, we must always refer to the learned scholars who specialize in the sciences of jurisprudence and religious teachings. It is only through their instruction that we can perform our religious duties correctly. Pointing towards this very fact, God Almighty commands in the Holy Qurān:

﴿ فَسۡـَٔلُوٓاْ أَهۡلَ ٱلذِّكۡرِ إِن كُنتُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُونَ ﴾

"Ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know."[1]

Even though the whole idea could not be clearer, certain elements within human society deter people from the path of truth and reason. They are busy trying to create doubt about the applicability of this universal principle when it comes to religious issues. In other words, they cast doubts in the minds of people regarding qualified religious scholars and acting according to their views. Every leading Islamic jurist clearly states within his *Risālah* (or book of religious edicts) that every Muslim must either be a *Mujtahid* (expert jurist) himself, or act in accordance to *Iḥtīyāt* (precaution) or do *Taqlīd* and follow a *Faqīh* who meets all the pre-requisites for others to emulate him. However, a group ridicules this unanimous verdict of the top most experts and declares *Taqlīd* meaningless in religious matters, dubbing it an act of monkeys. Is emulating our foremost religious scholars, known as the *Marāji'*, anything except an exact instance of the universal and natural principle discussed earlier? Is it essentially any different from when a patient goes to visit a certified doctor and, subsequently, considers him or herself bound to act in compliance with the doctor's prescriptions? Even when a doctor falls ill, having contracted a disease that lies beyond his or her own scope of expertise, he or she is compelled to seek the help of another doctor who enjoys the relevant specialization. That is what is meant by doing *Taqlīd of* the *Marāji'*,

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Naḥl: 43.

The word *Taqlīd* is a homonym that bears several different meanings and usages. Some of these signify repugnant acts. The existence of these less than admirable denotations has allowed people with malicious intent to play around with certain paralogistic fallacies, arguing that since *Taqlīd* bears these meanings, it must be an obscene practice in all its forms. As a result, they reject even the desirable types of *Taqlīd*. This rejection is academically unsound, since every different denotation has a completely different concept.

To better understand this linguistic phenomenon we need to look into the idea of homonyms a bit further. Some homonyms are such that their various meanings are completely distinct from one another, so much so that no confusion could ever take place in their usage. An example is the word pool. When used in a sentence, a "pool" of water could never be misunderstood for "pool", a popular card game in the western world. The context of the sentence will always give away the correct intended meaning. However, sometimes a homonym is such that its meanings are semantically similar. This can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Only people with an acute sense of language and conceptual clarity would readily be able to pick up the correct intended denotation. This is exactly where shoddy pseudo-intellectuals try to win some portion of their ill earned bread and butter. To do so, they set up shop and start dealing in paralogistic fallacies disguised as ground breaking academic theories and cutting-edge ideas. By attributing one undesirable meaning to the entire range of denotations held by a certain word, they seek to discredit the word itself and, in turn, dislodge even the positive and constructive

constructs that it signifies. They get away with such fallacies due to the relative semantic proximity of some of the meanings in question, whereas a close analysis would immediate reveal that the relationship between the said means was general inclusion in some cases, partial inclusion in others, and total disparity in the rest.

Based on this line of argument, the first thing to get out of the way in any sound academic exploration, be it in relation of Qurānic verses, narrated traditions or purely intellectual issues, is the matter of possible homonymic fallacies. We must always correctly understand and precisely define the key concepts being employed in any scientific study. For instance, within the discussion at hand, we must make it crystal clear what we mean by the terms *Itibā'*, *Uswah* or *Taqlīd*. The word *Taqlīd*, for instance, carries a couple of meanings. One of these is, "laymen referring to experts in matters pertaining to their expertise," regardless of whether the matters in question be practical or theoretical in nature. This represents a desirable, sensible and indeed indispensable act. However, another of the same word's meanings is "blind imitation," especially in matters contrary to ethical and moral standards of behavior. This, obviously, represents a completely undesirable, obscene and intellectually unjustifiable action. This latter sort of *Taqlīd*, which is normally fueled by selfish, carnal or lustful intentions, is mostly devoid of any proper or logical reasoning, making it very similar to monkey-like conduct. Furthermore, this type of imitation occurs in sub-standard societies and amongst people with no solid self-respect or sense of person-hood. When we see individuals wearing a certain kind of strange attire or supporting a particular type of

awkward hair style, simply because a football player or movie star wore or did the same thing, what we are actually observing is an instance of this repugnant form of blind and absurd *Taqlīd*. In fact, this *Taqlīd* epitomizes compound ignorance since in it the "ignorant" choose to refer to and emulate individuals who are either just as ignorant as themselves or even more so.

Every person should be able to present logical and sound reasons to justify the choices he or she makes. Just because someone dresses in a particular way should not influence other people in this way. They should have a strong sense of identity, and should exercise independent reasoning, taking conscious, reasonable decisions based on logical foundations. One should not feel compelled to emulate a person simply because he or she is rich or famous, since neither constitutes a sound or rational basis of such imitation.

Even more ridiculous is when we see the media perpetuating such behavior. They interview an athlete or professional weight lifter and ask him about things that are completely outside his field of activities e.g. they make economic queries about the state of the inflation or employment etc. Even worse is when they go asking specialized religious, philosophical and ideological questions from politicians, actors, singers and, in general, any and all people who do not have the slightest bit of qualification to answer the questions being asked. Furthermore, they exasperate this mistake by presenting such ill-informed opinions as facts. Common people, in turn, end up imitating these famous, but mostly ignorant individuals, in their actions and ideas. This is a most uncalled for model of *Taqlīd*. Interestingly enough, the

malicious groups that we mentioned earlier will seldom be found criticizing, debunking and rejecting such obviously undesirable and intellectually indefensible instances of *Taqlīd*. Instead, they focus all their critical attentions towards a perfectly admissible, and indeed indispensable, form of imitation and emulation, spewing all kinds of venomous propaganda against it. Ignoring all the genuinely dubious forms of *Taqlīd*, they exclusively attack the act of laymen referring to properly accredited religious scholars in matters of religion, a form of referral that is essential to any religious society. This they label as "monkey-like" behavior. The truth is that people who level such baseless accusations are themselves victims of monkey-like imitation as they thoughtlessly emulate the enemies of Islam and follow their directions.

The actual and hidden goal of these devious minds[1] is to convince people into giving up even the most sacred form

1. Ayatullah Misbah is referring to ideas articulated by Dr. Hāshim Āghā Jarī in his speech at the "House of Teachers", in the city of Hamadan, on the 19th of June 2002. In this speech, he unashamedly ridiculed the sacred tenets of Islam using the most uncivil and vile language, thus causing great grief to pious Muslims everywhere. Subsequent to this speech, a tide of criticism and protest emerged from the general public, university academia and the top-most religious scholars of the country calling for a judicial reprimand against the insolence in question. The utterly uncivil language used by the said person prevents us from quoting a large portion of his speech, but we will, nevertheless, cite excerpts from his talk so that the reader may gauge why a senior and compassionate scholar such as Ayatullah Misbah was so disturbed and agitated, and chose to stand up against the expressed ideas.

The named person, in a portion of his speech, said, "All the concepts and teaching presented within traditional and orthodox religious circles, are nothing but dust lined, dark and obsolete antiques that must be thoroughly criticized and, subsequently, thrown away." Later on, he rejects emulating and following the edicts of the *Marāji'* and proposes that people should derive their own interpretations and laws directly from religious texts regardless of what their level of knowledge or academic achievement may be. After this, he comments, "Why should people be asked to imitate and follow others. Are they monkeys?"

In another place in his speech he says, "We must not view the prophets and the imams as extra-ordinary individuals who were nothing like us. This talk that they are somehow above and beyond normal people, created before the creation of the universe itself, that their basic constitution is different from that of ours, that somehow their blood is of a different color, that they are born in a different manner, that they are born saying the *Āzān* (the Islamic prayer call), all this talk is utter nonsense. That they have no shadow, that they have two eyes in the front of their heads and two on the back". (The speaker did not quote doctrinal teaching here, but basically ridiculed Islamic points of view stating a few of them and then attributing fictional things to them. Similarly, he made several gestures aimed at making people laugh).

In an earlier speech delivered by him (and printed in The Weekly *'Aṣr-i Mā*, magazine of the terrorist MKO or Mujāhidīn-i Khalq Organization on the 16th August 2000), he quotes Karl Marx saying, "Religion is the opiate of the masses". Then he adds, "However, under religious governments, religion is not only the opiate of the masses but also the opiate of the government itself."

of *Taqlīd* i.e. the *Ta'assī* (emulation) and *Iqtadā* (obedience) of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as).

Correct *Taqlīd* and the Role of Pre-requisite Conditions

We are steadfast believers in Islam who wish to emulate the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams of his Ahl al-Bayt (as) so that we may drink from the life giving spring of their teachings. As such, the best way for us to get closest to their true instructions is to engage in *Taqlīd*, and in doing so we totally reject the baseless attacks made by malicious people, following vested agendas, against this valid form of emulation.

First of all, we must study the phenomenon of *Taqlīd* itself and see whether or not natural logic and the human intellect accept this practice as correct. Having done this, we must also look at narrated religious sources (the Holy Qurān and authentic narrated traditions) to see whether or not our religion allows for such an action to take place. Then, we must define the parameters within which this practice stands valid, as well as demarcate where and how it becomes illegitimate.

Another key factor to take into consideration is the role of time and space in *Taqlīd*. It must be remembered that certain religious laws are not universal but are in fact restricted to certain pre-defined conditions, making them valid only within those specific circumstances. These circumstantial restraints may be related to time, or space, or even both. In general, the influence of time and space upon human affairs and society is self-apparent for all to

see. Sometime a certain action is acceptable with a certain time period or location, while being completely unacceptable in another. For instance, there exist hot as well and cold areas in our own country, and people living in each of these areas wear clothing that fits their respective environments. Thus, time and space bear influence upon our clothing habits and decisions, and people in cold regions do not, and should not for the sake of their well-being, wear things that are designed for people in hotter regions.

So this raises the following question. The Holy Prophet (s) used to live in a categorically hot area of the world, and naturally wore clothing that was suitable to the said environment. As such, should people living in colder areas "follow" him in this aspect of their lives by shunning warm clothes and wearing cool ones instead, without taking into consideration the special circumstances that were present in the Holy Prophet's (s) time and place of residence? The answer is apparent. What it shows is that even in the most valid forms of *Taqlīd* one needs to delineate the parameters within which that act of emulation and imitation is applicable. We need to see whether there exist any hidden restraining clauses limiting the universal nature of the practice under scrutiny, so that we may discover any time or spatial pre-conditions that may play a role in it.

Let us further elaborate upon this matter. Sometimes we are dealing with a certain piece of speech, narrated or otherwise, and it contains within it certain spoken conditions. These conditions show that the spoken idea is not universal in nature, but the intended meaning of the speaker relates only to circumstances that match the

condition he or she has mentioned within their speech. At other times, we are analyzing actions and not pieces of narrated or direct speech. The problem with actions is that they do not contain explicit controlling conditions. These circumstantial conditions are derived from the content of the act itself, as well as the relevant environment within which the said act came into being. However, one must also remember that such "silent" conditions apply to speech as well. The mind derives them, not from the contents of the speech itself, but, as mentioned above, from the surrounding context within which the said piece of speech took place.

The Neccesity of *Ijtihād* and *Taqlīd* with Religion

There is no doubt that for understanding the commandants of Islam one cannot simply translate the narrated traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and present them to the masses so that they may derive the said laws and regulations themselves. This is utterly clear, even though some individuals adamantly insist otherwise and declare that there is no need for the *Fuqahā* to issue verdicts and publish collections of them in order for the public to use. These people assert that it is enough to provide the lay masses with the above mentioned narrated texts so that they may interpret them as they see fit. The reason why this line of thinking is flawed is that, firstly, many narrated traditions need an intricate set of pre-requisite sciences in order to be understood correctly. This pre-requisite science, and the proficiency to apply them accurately, is called *Ijtihād*. Narrated traditions need to be meticulously analyzed from various dimensions. Their chain of narration needs to be thoroughly scrutinized to confirm

their authenticity. If confirmed, their intended purpose for which they were articulated by the Holy Prophet (s) or Immaculate Imams (as) needs to be understood. Afterwards, they must be studied to see whether their contents are universal in nature or whether they are restricted by conditions. Furthermore, they must be compared to other relevant narrated traditions to see what relationship their contents have with these other traditions on the same subject matter. It must be seen whether these other traditions somehow limit or expand the denotations of the contents at hand, or whether they are mutually conflicting, leading to a semantic abeyance of sorts for the denotation itself. It must also be seen that, in case of conflicting denotations, are the two or more traditions in utter conflict, or are they only apparently contradictory and not truly so. All the above is but a portion of the long and tedious academic process that needs to occur before any derived law can be achieved from these narrations. Understandably, the process in question requires the attentions of a truly qualified expert, or in other words, a *Faqīh* specializing in the Holy Qurān, the narrated traditions and all the related sciences that apply therein. Sometime we are confronted by a narrated tradition, which is authentic, but we do not comprehend clearly what the Imam (as) meant within the statement in question. To even begin to understand such case, the *Faqīh* needs to be an expert of *Fiqh al-Ḥadith* as well, so that he may be able to compare this tradition to all others in its class and category, in terms of subject matter or time period etc., and thus derive the atmosphere and setting within which this statement was uttered by the Imam (as). Again, having done so would not mean the end of his task. He would also have to look for the hidden conditions talked about earlier,

that may actually be present within entirely different statements narrated from the same or other Imams (as).

Then there is the matter regarding the actions of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as) as opposed to their words. We, Muslims, are obliged to obey the holy Prophet (s) and his sacred progeny (as) in their actions and behavior. Herein, we find certain actions that are quite clear in nature and contain no pre-conditions. These are, in fact, universal actions. As a result, there is no need for *Ijtihād* in order to follow them. For instance, Imam 'Alī's (as) justice, which is universal and applicable in all circumstances, can be followed by everyone. However, on other occasions actions are not so clear in nature, and bear certain hidden conditions that need to be understood. For instance, everyone knew Imam 'Alī (as) as someone who worshiped God Almighty almost all the time. Even his enemies testified to this fact. He would dedicate a large portion of his time to ritual prayer, and would be engaged in supplications even while irrigating and tending the date trees. Nevertheless, we ask ourselves the question: If a recommended act of prayer were to come into contradiction with an obligatory act of prayer, what would Imam 'Alī (as) do? For example, when Imam 'Alī (as) was obliged to fight the renowned Arab warrior, 'Amr ibn 'Abduwad, would he have chosen to pray or recite the Holy Qurān instead? Obviously he would not do such a thing, because he was able to judge which action superseded the other in its priority, and would thus act accordingly.

Therefore, we see that some of his actions were restricted by other actions, just as we observed that praying was restricted by *Jihād*. As a result, whenever *Jihād* came into

contradiction with prayer, he would choose the first in place of the second. In trying to follow such instances of behavior, we again find ourselves in need of *Ijtihād*. Whenever a particular action is narrated for us from the Immaculate Imams (as), we cannot just jump into imitating these actions under any and all circumstances. Rather, we need to see what the nature of the act in question truly is, and whether there are restrictions involved. In fact, we need to step even further and see what motivated that act in the first place. Only after completely grasping the whole canvas of contextual detail related to the behavior under study, can be hope to emulate it in accordance with the Immaculate Imam's (as) true intentions.

In short, we need *Ijtihād* to understand the actions of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) just as we need it to comprehend their recorded words and speeches. Without it, and without the *Fuqahā*, we will simply find ourselves lost and unable to derive any correct conclusions.

LECTURE THREE
FACTORS LEADING TO *TAQLĪD*

Need for *Taqlīd*; Refuting the Theory that *Taqlīd* is Instinctive in Nature

In our earlier discussions we drew attention towards the fact that *Taqlīd* (or emulating an expert) was a logical course of action. After having established this premise, we now need to tackle three key queries: (1) Who must we emulate? (2) Within which issues is emulation correct? (3) What sort of motivation is required when emulating others?

Before answering the above questions, we must first see whether *Taqlīd* or emulation is a conscious act, based on intellectual decision making, or does it constitute some sort of instinctive reaction that takes place unconsciously without us being aware of it. If the first be true, we would need to look into the motivational frameworks that lead someone to act in the said manner, whereas, if the second be accurate than there is no point to any of the above mentioned inquiries.

Some famous western psychologists, like William McDougall[1], believe that the imitation of other's actions in general, represents an instinctive reaction that people display right from the nascent years of their childhood. For instance, a child tries to mimic the actions and words of his parents without having the faintest idea of what they

1. William McDougall (22 June 1871 – 28 November 1938).

mean or why he or she is imitating them. This underlying instinct continues throughout childhood, goes on into adolescence and lingers on in one way or another throughout the course of a person's life span. Therefore, according to this particular opinion, *Taqlīd* or emulation is simply an inherent and unconscious instinct that we follow without any active involvement in the matter. This rather extreme view is, nevertheless, not shared by the majority of the world's research psychologists.

In answer to the above stated theory, it must be said that during the period of childhood most of a person's actions are instinctive in nature. This is because the faculties of thought and reasoning are still in their embryonic stages, lacking strength and maturity. However, as time goes by and the intellect strengthens itself, the role of the instincts subsides. As the intellect develops, unconscious instincts give way to conscious decision making and active involvement. A baby, right from the very first moments after its birth, knows how to feed from its mother's breasts. No one needs to teach it how to do so. This is an entirely instinctive response. However, as the child grows bigger and becomes conscious of its actions, it ceases to move its lips without due cause or motivation. As it grows older still, it begins to understand that it needs food, and what food constitutes and how it must be attained, until a full realization of all these matters, and others, is achieved in adulthood. Therefore, even though behavior such as crying, laughing etc. were instinctive during childhood, they are definitely not so during the latter stages of a person's life. We can observe this by experimenting with our own selves. We act whenever we wish to i.e. our conscious intention yields itself in action, whereas, we

refrain from doing so when we wish to do nothing at all. Likewise, we find ourselves completely independent when we emulate others, and are similarly conscious of our decision when we choose not to do so. As a result, we must conclude that since *Taqlīd* is indeed a conscious act in mature adults, it must have an intellectual foundation and must bear factors that motivate it.

Today, due to the social conditions prevalent in the Western world, there exist groups of people that insist on behaving in manners that others do not approve of and would never follow. By doing so, they seek to express their individuality and intellectual independence. This has led to a mushroom growth of strange fads within Western culture. Essentially, the existence of this phenomenon stands in contrast to the idea of emulation. In fact, this misled creativity aimed at opposing the norms of western society clearly shows that human behavior is not exclusively shaped by the unconscious instinct of *Taqlīd* and imitation. Instead, it can be shaped and molded by a host of different conscious motivators.

That imitation and *Taqlīd* in grownups is not instinctive is evident from the fact that when a youngster enters practical life, he or she finds a number of mutually contradictory options placed in front of him or her. This young person, at the cusp of his or her maturity, cannot possibly take up all the options available, which he or she should have ended up doing if life were just an expression of instinctive imitation. Rather, we find this youngster choosing one of the numerous paths that lie in front, basing this decision on active reasoning and a conscious awareness of the motivators involved. Thus, we see that a vast majority of people in the world engage in active and

conscious imitation, emulating certain people while not emulating others. Why do they do this and what motivates them in their imitation of others or *Taqlīd*?

Before going on to answer these questions, we must first mention that *Taqlīd* or emulation occur in two areas of life: (1) It occurs within the sphere of thought, belief, ideology and opinion, and (2) it takes place in the realm of actions and behavior.

Correct *Taqlīd*: A Method for Reaching Reality

Human beings are creatures possessing reason. Thus, when imitating someone within the sphere of thoughts and beliefs, the motivation behind this *Taqlīd* should be the attainment of truth. In other words, since a person realizes that he or she lacks the necessary knowledge to discover the objective truth in a given matter, or that the matter itself is so complex that the person in question finds him or herself incapable of separating correct and incorrect notions present therein, this person actively chooses to refer him or herself to an expert within that field of study and, subsequently, follows the conclusions drawn by this qualified expert, not just because he or she wants to follow an opinion per se, but because he or she believes that following the said verdict stands a good chance of leading him or her to the reality that he or she originally sought. This represents a legitimate motivation for *Taqlīd* in the sphere of ideas and beliefs. As such, *Taqlīd* carried out with such an incentive would prove to be beneficial to society in general.

When the motivation behind *Taqlīd* is purely the unprejudiced attainment of truth, it is only reasonable that

one select the best possible expert in the area of study wherein one finds oneself searching for reality. In turn, one would look for an expert who has a clear record and is not known to have made mistakes in his or her verdicts. This, of course, represents the most ideal of circumstances. On the other hand, if someone of this sort is not available, then one would seek out someone who has a relatively clean record and displays the most minimal tendency to make mistakes. After all, a doctor who treats patients all day is prone to make mistakes once in a while. However, if the frequency of such mistakes and their qualitative nature is reasonably small, then there is no reason for people to deprive themselves of his services.

In contrast, some people do not engage in *Taqlīd* based on the right reasons. Their motivation is not the attainment of truth, but their imitation of others is entirely for incorrect intentions. Such individuals may coincidentally start off on the right path, but because they have no concern for the truth they soon fall astray and end up totally divorced from reality. One of the main reasons why this happens is because they choose to follow unqualified people, selected by them in order to achieve those ulterior objectives. These people are in no position to lead anyone to the truth and, thus, end up taking their followers away from the path of prosperity. Likewise, even if a person is motivated by a sincere search for truth, but does not employ adequate care in choosing whom he or she follows, then such a person will also find him or herself led astray. This is because, despite good intentions, he or she will still end up emulating an individual who is not the most able expert available. For instance, a person suffering from a headache consults a friend who suffered from the same ailment

earlier. This friend suggests a medicine that he himself had taken and which had resulted in his headache going away. As a result, our subject takes the said medicine hoping to be cured in no time, but unfortunately his headache becomes worse and he also develops a host of other side effects. The reason behind his predicament is that he did not consult an expert. What he should have done was research his available options and find a qualified doctor suited to treat him for his medical condition. In other words, he should have gone looking for a certified expert.

Sensible people do not just start following anyone when dealing with matters of importance, but they strive to find someone qualified enough to be considered an expert. Furthermore, they follow accepted criteria when deciding whether or not someone qualifies as an expert. For instance, when they plan to consult a certain physician, they first try to research his credentials, asking well informed people about his academic standing and past record, and only then do they decide to swallow down the medicine that he may prescribe. Likewise, in matters related to religion and jurisprudential law, we find that when a youngster reaches the age of maturity, it is not acceptable for him to just start doing *Taqlīd* of any Islamic scholar, but rather he is obliged to research and find the top-most scholar in terms of knowledge and ability. He is duty-bound to consult well-informed people until he becomes completely sure as to who, from amongst the leading Islamic scholars, is the *Ālum* or most capable in the derivation of Islamic laws. Having done this, he can now start following the rulings of this expert as his *Marja',* with a clear mind and peaceful soul.

Kinds of Blind Emulation and Incorrect *Taqlīd*

1. Taqlīd or imitation of the objectionable traditions of past generations

Blind imitation, devoid of any logical basis, is one of the most dangerous things for human societies. It is an impediment to progress and development both for the individual and society in general. A foremost instance of such unreasonable behavior comes to light when people recklessly follow the rites, rituals and traditions of their forefathers and past generations without giving due consideration to the ill effects and consequences that such practices incur. This phenomenon has been a key factor within the onset of decadence and eventual fall of various human communities throughout history. In fact, it forms one of the major reasons that instigated nations to resist, oppose, and reject the invitation towards monotheism brought to them by divine prophets sent forth by God Almighty. The Holy Qurān says that whenever God Almighty sent one of His prophets to a nation, he was always faced with rejection and ridicule, and was shunned as a magician, madman or poet:

﴿وَيَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَتَارِكُوٓاْ ءَالِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجۡنُونٍ﴾

"And [they would] say, 'Shall we abandon our gods for a crazy poet?" [1]

The prophets of God Almighty would ask these people, "What are these gods capable of that you worship them so; fall before them, pray to them to fulfill your desires and

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Ṣāfāt: 36.

sacrifice animals and other things to please them? Is it not true that you have fashioned them with your own hands? Do they have any sort of consciousness that you prostrate before them?" In reply, the idol worshippers would simply say, "We worship them because our forefathers did the same thing." The Holy Qurān says:

﴿ وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ فِي قَرۡيَةٖ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتۡرَفُوهَآ إِنَّا وَجَدۡنَآ ءَابَآءَنَا عَلَىٰٓ أُمَّةٖ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰٓ ءَاثَٰرِهِم مُّقۡتَدُونَ ﴾

"So it has been that We did not send any warner to a town before you, without its affluent ones saying, 'We found our fathers following a creed and we are indeed following in their footsteps."[1]

These nations believed that the rites, rituals and beliefs of their ancestors were somehow sacred and, thus, it was their duty to keep these practices alive even though the actions and ideas in question were totally bereft of logic or common sense. Again the Holy Qurān tells us:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ٱتَّبِعُواْ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ قَالُواْ بَلۡ نَتَّبِعُ مَآ أَلۡفَيۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ ءَابَآءَنَآۚ أَوَلَوۡ كَانَ ءَابَآؤُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡقِلُونَ شَيۡـٔٗا وَلَا يَهۡتَدُونَ ﴾

When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'No, we will follow what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither exercised their reason, nor were guided?[2]

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Zukhruf: 23.
2. The Holy Qurān, Al-Baqarah: 170.

Throughout known history the most bizarre of ideas, beliefs and practices have existed within human communities, and they persist to do so even within some parts of the world today. We, who live in an Islamic country, are seldom aware of the presence of such things outside our borders. In present day India, for instance, hundreds of millions of people are engaged in idolatry, and some of these man-made deities are such that one feels ashamed to speak of them within civilized circles. For instance, they have crafted for themselves a deity that is shaped like the male genitalia. Women who cannot bear children pour water on these phallic idols and then drink it in order to cure their condition. Many rituals that existed here, in our own country, prior to the Islamic Revolution e.g. the *Sūrī* Wednesday, were indeed senseless and absurd. Nevertheless, certain people who wish to follow these practices and revive them, have sought to popularize them. They gather together, light a fire and jump over it simply because they believe that their ancestors used to do the same thing, even though the action in question hold no utility or logic whatsoever.

In this country, where the sacred blood of thousands of martyred youngsters was spilled so as to revive true Islam, where great sacrifices were made, where pious Muslims and devoted scholars were tortured and made to bear excruciating difficulties, in such a country the Ministry of Islamic Guidance sets aside an official budget for the revival of the above mentioned nonsensical traditions! Indeed, nothing but blind, prejudicial racism could have motivated the desire to resume such so-called *national* activities within society. Such racist ideas of the inherent supremacy of one's own nation are strongly condemned

within the Holy Qurān and labeled as utterly ridiculous. Again, the self-styled know-it-alls of our society, champions of the so-called fight against *Taqlīd*, have nothing to say against these obviously ludicrous forms of emulation. These they do not shun as "monkey-like" behavior. In their view, the only thing deserving such derogatory appellations is the act of lay-people referring to qualified religious experts in order to understand Islamic teachings and laws.

In reality, blind and baseless *Taqlīd* of ancestral rituals, beliefs and traditions is the kind of imitation and emulation that should be condemned and called "monkey-like". This practice is seriously detrimental to human society and has many dangerous outcomes. One of them related to the *Sūrī* Wednesday festivals, for instance, is that people get severely burnt. Another is that these gathering provide an atmosphere where the sexes are allowed to intermingle, furnishing grounds for illicit relations amongst them.

Whenever an individual wishes to emulate another, he or she must first investigate whether the party in question has any rational arguments corroborating the practices they adhere to. Secondly, he or she must examine whether the party in question has the necessary credentials to qualify as someone who can be emulated. Here, we would again like to reiterate that *Taqlīd* is only correct if a person truly wishes to find the truth, and desires to act according to reality. In fact, in such a case, individuals and societies alike have no choice but to turn to *Taqlīd*, and without it there is little hope of them successfully remaining sound, healthy and holistically prosperous. On the other hand, if the motivation behind *Taqlīd* be that one wishes to

thoughtlessly follow the rituals of one's ancestors, especially if such practices run contrary to rationality, then this *Taqlīd* will yield nothing but destruction and despair, both in this world and the hereafter. However, if these rituals are related to matters of little or no importance, like many family or tribal traditions, then they would cause no tangible harm even if they are nonsensical. In stark contrast, if these practices are related to issues of grave significance, like worship, faith, matrimony, family or other affairs which directly affect a person's worldly and after-worldly existence, then there is no justification for anyone to adhere to such actions. This is especially true if they are deemed objectionable by the human intellect and divine law. If a person, after knowing that the intellect and divine law reject a certain practice, were to allow him or herself to engage in it simply because his or her forefathers engaged in the same act, then he or she has nothing to look forward to but a host of terrible consequences in this world and the next.

2. Taqlīd for the sake of attaining fame and good-will

Sometimes people emulate others for the sake of achieving fame and social status. Some individuals who do not have an independent, outstanding personality and lack social influence and respect, try hard to acquire it but are unaware of how to achieve this goal. At the same time, they observe that certain kinds of people in society enjoy great respect, are well-known and famous. As a consequence, they try to imitate these people in the hope of attaining some measure of the good reputation and social standing that the latter command within society. For instance, many youngsters suffering from identity crises

and wishing that they were someone of significance decide that they may be able to compensate this personality deficit by emulating various types of celebrities. They do this so diligently that they copy their favorite *stars* in everything, starting from the style of clothes they wear and the form of make-up they maintain, going right up to mimicking the way they behave in public. These young people find it easier to do this rather than to use their own minds to resolve the pressure they feel building up inside them. Obviously, following intellectually mediocre personalities in this manner is totally without sense or rationale, and most certainly be considered undesirable. People who engage is this kind of *Taqlīd* are either too lazy to use their own common-sense, or have not yet matured to a level of cognitive development that could allow them to choose their paths through logical reasoning. They just follow these readily available examples of fame and fortune because they have a desire to be recognized, a yearning to stand out and be appreciated.

First of all, being an actor, artist or any other form of celebrity does not qualify one to become someone worth emulating. Following such individuals shows that a person is intellectually deficient or that he or she is just lazy. As such, this sort of *Taqlīd* must be judged as illegitimate, and if it leads to actions that are contrary to jurisprudential law, then it is seriously detrimental for the individual in question and society in general. Specifically, it harms the individual significantly by undermining his or her essence as a unique person, and attacks society by encouraging the growth of a host of vices. Although, we must also add that if such *Taqlīd* does not lead to actions prohibited by

religious law, then it would only be deemed a waste of time with no major adverse consequences to speak of.

Today, wearing certain kinds of clothes and supporting a particular style of make-up and hairdo by young people in our country is directly responsible for the erosion of our national identity and cultural independence. Essentially, *Taqlīd* in these matters is normally carried out by people lacking a proper sense of self-identity, and thus they rarely appreciate the importance of preserving national identity and cultural freedom. In present day India, apart from what we mentioned earlier regarding idolatry, the people have tried hard to maintain their cultural and national identities. Even after having been colonized for a hundred years, wherein the colonial powers tried viciously to introduce and propagate western culture within the lives of all Indians, the people of this region still dress in their local attires when representing their respective country on the global stage. By doing so, they display their steadfast commitment to their unique and historical national identity. On the other hand, we also find people amongst various nations who give up their own culture and identity at the drop of a hat, and without any good or rational reason, just do so to mimic the mannerisms of foreigners. Every society and nation should at least preserve for itself a measure of self-respect that allows it to maintain and protect its own rational and logical values in the face of any cultural onslaught from outside its borders. It should not blindly follow anything and everything being imported from abroad on the pretext that everything that exists there is inherently superior and worth imitating. If it does so, then it will have to pay dearly in terms of the ill effects and degradation that shall follow suit.

3. Taqlīd for the sake of group interests

Sometimes people understand full well that a certain practice is useless, or even harmful, but follow it because it fulfills their personal or group interests. In doing so, they try to attain for themselves some of the temporary wealth that this world has to offer. Some people find themselves in a position, nationally or internationally, wherein the vested interests of their own parties or groups are best served by adhering to a belief system that is dictated to them by foreign hands. They accept this alien set of ideas for the fulfilment of their selfish purposes while ignoring all standards of rational thought as well as their own national values. In fact, they do not just stop at following these ideas themselves, but strive to spread them within society. Indeed, if *Taqlīd* be motivated by such factors then it is even more abhorrent than the other types. During the time of the constitutional movement within Iran, there existed politicians who acted as agents of various Western powers. They argued that the only way for Iran to ever achieve development was to transform itself from head to toe, completely abandon its own identity and re-fashion itself in the image of Western countries. Even today, certain hypocrites within our ranks, who present themselves as Muslims, believe the very same thing but lack the courage to say so openly. As a result, they normally present their ideas secretly and do the damage they seek without attracting too much flak.

Many anti-Islam and anti-social activities that certain political gangs have carried out within our country after the Islamic Revolution, and which have intensified during current times, are such that they totally lack any justification. Furthermore, they are even highly offensive

to the general public. This shows, and we have no doubt about it, that the people who are engaged in these activities are indeed agents employed by foreign hands. Although some of them might be simple minded and misled, but what about those who have made a 180 degree u-turn in all their political, social and ideological views? These are the same individuals who until yesterday presented themselves as defenders of Islamic and Revolutionary ideals and would go around labeling others as anti-Islamic and counter-revolutionary. However, today they are entirely transformed, expressing baseless and thoughtless ideas, and acting in obviously unacceptable manners. Such persons cannot be simply deemed as naïve. Rather, they have most certainly sold themselves out to foreign powers and have dedicated themselves to act in accordance with their agenda and interests.

Anyhow, according to the principles of social psychology, many a social practice is carried out as a result of blind imitation, without any logical or religious foundation, motivated to preserve party interests. This is not something new and the Holy Qurān talks about it, mentioning its psychological and social roots. For instance, God Almighty addresses the polytheists saying:

﴿وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا ٱتَّخَذْتُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَوْثَٰنًا مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِى ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا﴾

"He said, 'You have taken idols [for worship] besides Allah for the sake of [mutual] affection amongst yourselves in the life of the world."[1]

The verses of the Holy Qurān are full of very important psychological and sociological teachings. For example, the verse mentioned above, points towards a major psychological and sociological factor that causes societies to deviate from the path of truth, and try to protect customs that are not only senseless, but superstitious and dangerous. In the verse being discussed, God Almighty tells the polytheists that they do not engage in idolatry because their minds rationally tell them to do so. The truth is that the intellect would never tell anyone to engage in such a ridiculous act, and neither does God Almighty sanction this vile practice.

﴿مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِهِۦٓ إِلَّآ أَسْمَآءً سَمَّيْتُمُوهَآ أَنتُمْ وَءَابَآؤُكُم مَّآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَٰنٍ﴾

"You do not worship besides Him but [mere] names that you and your fathers have coined, for which Allah has not sent down any authority."[2]

God Almighty tells them that the motivation behind their irrational and religiously illegitimate actions is, in fact, their desire to preserve social linkages and connections.

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-'Ankabūt: 25.
2. The Holy Qurān, Yūsuf: 40.

The Factor that Motivates a Blind Following of Western Culture

Today, we see some politicians and officials opening the path for Western values that are neither rational nor sanctioned by God, to spread throughout various Islamic nations and, indeed, our own country. The reason behind their actions is that they desperately want to please Western powers and, in return, receive access to the European common market. Through these measures we seek to better our relationship with these countries so that an ambassador, or foreign minister, from the Western world, maybe Britain or Germany, would come forward and praise us, and so that the IMF would give us some credit. Such a self-derogatory policy that presents us in servitude before the so-called developed countries so that we may gather some prestige or honor by acting according to their dictates is completely rejected within Qurānic logic. It is clearly expressed by God Almighty in the following Qurānic verse:

﴿وَٱتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ ءَالِهَةً لِّيَكُونُواْ لَهُمۡ عِزًّا﴾

"They have taken gods besides Allah that they may be a [source of] honor to them"[1-2]

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1. The Holy Qurān, Maryam: 81.
2. In the Holy Qurān words such as *Ālihah* or *Arbāb* are not just used to mean "creator", but rather they are used more often to signify "the one worshipped", "the one who manages the universe" and any other entity that people obey and follow. God, within verses that employ these terms, normally intends to establish the necessity of oneness, unity and exclusivity within *Ulūhīyat* (authority), *Ubūdīyat* (worship) and *Rabūbīyat* (divine

Some polytheists in history would prostrate themselves before idols simply because they feared that if they did not do so they would be stripped of their prestige in the eyes of other polytheists. Therefore, they would engage in this act, doing what everyone else was doing, in order to earn social standing. Just like some Muslim politicians today who go to visit countries where people still worship idols, and in order to win their friendship they choose to show respect to their idols!

These people suffer from religious pluralism, which is today a defining doctrine within Western culture and thought, and is also enthusiastically promoted by Western countries. This pattern of thinking is becoming more and more common amongst our liberal thinkers, and in it one is led to believe that he or she must view all religions with the same amount of reverence. According to this point of view, every religion is true and righteous for the followers of that religion. There is no absolute truth, as the concept of truth is relative. Consequently, there is no need to regards one's own faith as correct and someone else's conviction as false. The end result is that we pay respect to

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lordship and sustenance), whereas the necessity of oneness or exclusivity in *Khāliqīyat* (creation) is taken as unquestionable. Therefore, within the following verse of the Holy Qurān, He uses the word *Arbāb* while implying that those who consider other human beings as their ultimate and supreme masters should be rebuked: ***"…and that some of us will not take some others as lords besides Allah"*** (The Holy Qurān, Āl-i Imrān: 64). Similarly, in another place He reprimands those who take their own lusts and desires as their own masters: ***"Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god?"*** (The Holy Qurān, Al-Furqān: 43).

their idols and they, in turn, visit and pay respect to our mosques and holy places. However, Islamic thought is not compatible with this kind of belief. It does not allow us to prostrate ourselves before their deities just to win their friendship, regardless of whether they do the same for us or not. Truly, how can a genuine Muslim bow before a false god? How can he or she show respect to an idol, be it made of stone or flesh and bone? How can he or she degrade him or herself so, and in turn deface the dignity of Islam?

The Alliance between Hypocritical Factions and Foreign Powers

Indeed, studying the Holy Qurān allows us to identify factions within society that aim to take us towards ultimate cultural surrender, and who help in the formation of hypocritical ideas. They are the same factions that seek to promote irreligious and secular thoughts within society. For instance, when we see certain personalities completely changing all their social, ideological and religious views within the past few years, going from being a bunch of religious and revolutionary extremists to proponents of anti-Islamic and counter-revolutionary ideas within a short period of time, we must think why this metamorphosis took place. The answer is presented to us within the Holy Qurān, in chapter Al-Nisā, verse 140. If we compare this Qurānic verse with the two that precede it, while trying to discern the connection between them, we will discover the core element that causes the creation of hypocrisy within Muslim society. In the beginning, within verse 138 of the aforementioned Qurānic chapter, God Almighty says:

﴿بَشِّرِ ٱلْمُنَـٰفِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴾

"Give the hypocrites glad-tidings that there is a painful punishment for them"

The hypocrites, within Islamic history, would act as compassionate friends and well-wishers whenever they wanted to lead someone astray. In the verse above, God Almighty prescribes for them an end that fits their wrong-doing using a demeanor quite like their own behavior. The word *Bishārah*, or glad-tidings, is used when one is informed of rewards that one will be given. Its usage in the above Qurānic statement is meant to mock the hypocrites. Similar instances are present within other sections of the Holy Qurān where God Almighty is seen ridiculing those with Hellfire, or deriding the arrogance of pretentious people who believe others to be inferior and themselves superior. God Almighty scorns them in the Holy Qurān saying:

﴿ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْكَرِيمُ ﴾

"[and tell them,] "Taste this (the torments of Hell)! Indeed you are the [self-styled] mighty and noble!"[1]

Moving on, God Almighty describes the hypocrites in verse 139 of the Qurānic chapter Al-Nisā, saying:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ ٱلْكَـٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِن دُونِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ
أَيَبْتَغُونَ عِندَهُمُ ٱلْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ ٱلْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Dukhān: 49.

"…Those who take the faithless for allies instead of the faithful; do they seek honour with them? [If so,] indeed all honour belongs to Allah."

The hypocrites referred to by God in the above, and other, verses of the Holy Qurān used to live amongst the Muslims. They used to pray, fast, give *Zakāt* (or obligatory poor dues) and engage in various other outwardly righteous acts. However, during war time, they would come up with a multitude of excuses in order to save themselves from going to the battlefield. Sometimes, they would even join other Muslims during *Jihād* (or sacred war) so as to maintain their cover and keep up their alibi, but they would do so only to stand aside safely when the actual conflict began. If victory came calling, they would declare themselves deserving of just rewards, but if the Muslims were to suffer defeat, they would immediately rebuke them saying that they had already known what would happen and had already advised their *brethren* against embarking on such ill-destined misadventures. Anyhow, they would always treat the sincere believers badly, utilizing every opportunity to criticize them, and continue with their malicious scheming. On the other hand, they always maintained cordial relations with the disbelievers, secretly plotting and conspiring with them against the Muslim community. They believed that by siding with the disbelievers they would eventually be able to secure power for themselves, just like some politicians in the present era, who name themselves "reformists" and try to win the support of foreign powers. To do this, they act and speak in a manner that would earn them praise from foreign media sources, and win them support from lobbies within the Western

world. They believe that if certain media outlets and American senators were to throw their weight behind them, they would most certainly be able to secure their position in power and, thus, perpetuate their social and political influence. Can we assume that these ignorant individuals truly believe God Almighty to be the source of all prestige while they knock on His enemies' doors begging them for support? These intellectually impoverished people seek to re-establish contact with the enemies of our Islamic Revolution to gain a measure of respect, while ensuring some sort of continuation for their political clout.

It is here, and for such instances, that God Almighty says in the Holy Qurān:

﴿وَقَدۡ نَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِي ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ أَنۡ إِذَا سَمِعۡتُمۡ ءَايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ يُكۡفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسۡتَهۡزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقۡعُدُواْ مَعَهُمۡ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُواْ فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيۡرِهِۦٓ إِنَّكُمۡ إِذٗا مِّثۡلُهُمۡۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ جَامِعُ ٱلۡمُنَٰفِقِينَ وَٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا﴾

"Certainly, He has revaled to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's signs being disbelieved and derided, do not sit with them until they engage in some other discourse, or else you [too] will be like them. Indeed Allah will gather the hypocrites and the faithless in hell, all together."[1]

After reprimanding the hypocrites for forging alliances with His enemies, God Almighty tells His Apostle that he must never sit and engage in conversation with people

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 140.

who gather together to ridicule the verses of His holy book and mock sacrosanct beliefs. One does not have the right to sit and listen to people who make fun of Islamic teachings within their speeches, who impertinently mock the Immaculate Imams (as) saying that they (as) stand upside down on their heads after they are born and, in this position, recite the *Āzān*. A Muslim is duty bound not to attend such sessions where Islam is derided and the divine doctrine scoffed at. Furthermore, if one attends such derogatory sessions, and remains silent when faced with such explicit affronts, one would gradually have ones faith washed away, as this blasphemous mindset slowly seeps into souls. When a person remains silent before such blasphemy, implicitly approving of it through this silence, he or she joins the ranks of the faithless hypocrites. As such, the outcome awaiting this person is the same outcome awaiting any other disbeliever and enemy of God Almighty i.e. Hellfire.

The connection between the above quoted Qurānic verses is that these two verses together show us that hypocrisy does not appear in an individual suddenly. A person does not just wake up one day and decide to attack religious teachings. This behavior is actually a culmination of a long and slow process, which begins when this person starts listening to insulting and blasphemous talk. As this dangerous practice continues, this individual loses his or her sensitivity, positive partiality and sense of belonging to religion. In the end, you see that men or women who were once ready to give their lives to protect Islam, have

1. The respected teacher is referring to the speech made by Dr. Āghā Jarī, sections of which were quoted within earlier footnotes.

now effectively turned into active threats, targeting the very faith that they once held so dear. People who started off listening to blasphemous content, eventually turned out as proponents for ideas that deem Islamic teachings distasteful or regard them as obsolete. In the end, we see them calling for the establishment of an Islamic protestant movement aimed at bring about a Muslim reformation.

Desensitizing Muslims vis-à-vis their Sacred Values

Today, we see newspapers and books being published and various movies and speeches being made wherein sacred religious values are attacked, and blasphemous concepts are spread throughout our pious communities to slowly desensitize the public about their most sacred beliefs and condition people to accept all forms of insolence towards their sacrosanct values. This would open the gates to an all-out eradication of religious beliefs, because without getting rid of the sensitivity and loyalty that people feel towards their religion, it is almost impossible to convince them to throw it away. Only after a successful desensitization can blasphemy truly become free. For instance, a while back in the African country of Nigeria, a beauty contest was held where an article disrespecting the Prophet Muhammad (s) was read out. This public insolence prompted angry demonstrations in numerous cities within Nigeria with huge numbers of people attending to show their rage. The protests were so intense that hundreds of people lost their lives trying to defend the honor of the Prophet of Islam (s).

We can never forget that during the last days of Imam Khumayni's life, an apostate named Salman Rushdie wrote a despicable book titled *The Satanic Verses* and, within it,

he insulted the Holy Messenger (s). Muslims all over the globe poured out in mass protests and a number of people were martyred. The Imam issued a verdict declaring the author of this vile book an apostate and blasphemer, and issued a death warrant against him. Several Islamic organizations announced bounties on the man's head. Subsequently, many unsuccessful efforts were made to overturn the Imam's edict, but it stands strong and valid to this day. Could the Imam, a man who was saturated with pious loyalty for Islam, have imagined that several Salman Rushdies would start popping up in his own country, a country that is the epicenter of the Islamic world and the seat of Shia learning? Could he have ever imagined that the Immaculate Imams (as) would actually be insulted here, and that certain sections of the clergy, alongside a number of apparently good men, would stand up to protect the perpetrators? Why is it that when a man named Hāshim Āghā Jarī insulted our noble Imams (as) in this Islamic country, and the courts found him guilty and sentenced him to death, a section of society stood up to condemn this decision, labelling it as shameful? O' you who have invested everything in pleasing various foreign powers, is it not time for you to display some measure of shame! What is the difference between this man and Salman Rushdie? Is it not so that if this verdict were to be reversed, the ground would be provided for the reversal of the Imam's edict as well? Will not others accuse us of hypocrisy and double standards when they see that apostasy and blasphemy are openly committed in our own country and we have failed to act against it? If we let this man go, a man convicted and sentenced to death, why should we be allowed to issue a death warrant against a foreign national, especially when he has not stood trial in

any court? They will say, "He should have at least been given the right to defend himself in court." How can we expect the verdict against Salman Rushdie to stand if we annul the verdict against Āghā Jarī? Did anyone have the courage to deride Islamic values during the early days of the Revolution, when the Imam was still alive? Is it not true that when, during the life time of the Imam, an interview was aired on state radio in which a woman said, "Today, our role model is Oshin[1] and not Fāṭimah Zahrā (as)", the Imam ordered the reporter as well as all other relevant officials of the state media company to be fired? Is it not true that the Imam declared that if this woman had uttered the said words in full realization of what they implied, she would have indeed been an apostate? Despite all this, today a person stands up and says, "Religion is not only an opiate of the masses, but an opiate of governments as well." Then he goes on to insult our most sacrosanct ideals with the utmost insolence, only for us to see certain people holding officials positions in this country, and others, fall in line to defend the inexcusable acts of this shameless apostate.

God Almighty prohibits us from listening to or reading any blasphemous content because it is from here that the poisonous seeds of hypocrisy are sown in our souls. Hypocrites, who are seen deriding religion today, started their journey by listening to and reading blasphemous ideas, until eventually these ideas became normal to them. Then, with the sensitivity set aside, these ideas were able to affect their own thoughts. In conclusion, they followed their path to ignorance until they finally reached a state of

1. A popular character in a foreign TV serial.

animosity for faith and divine teachings. Now, they spend their days and nights plotting and planning against religion, hatching new schemes and concocting new fallacies to weaken the faith of the Muslim masses. Sometimes they say, "People have the right to change their religion whenever they may see fit," as if religion was some sort of dress that one can simply take off and throw away whenever one wants. At other times they declare, "Democracy within a system must evolve to a level that people may gain the power to change their system of governance at will, even if this system were an Islamic system established through the sacrifices of countless martyrs."

LECTURE FOUR
THE POSSIBILITY AND NECESSITY OF FOLLOWING AND OBEYING IMMACULATE ROLE-MODELS

How to Follow the Immaculate Imams (as) During the Era of Occultation

The blessed person of the Holy Prophet (as) and the Immaculate Imams (as) is indeed the greatest gift that God Almighty granted all Muslims, and especially the Shias. These are supreme personalities, endowed with an immeasurable degree of perfection and bestowed with unfathomable knowledge and wisdom. They are the foremost of Almighty God's true and pious servants who personify all excellent human characteristics and divine merits. Alongside these lofty traits, they also enjoy infallibility and are, thus, protected from all kinds of sins and errors, both within their thoughts, actions and words. They are ideal role-models for all Muslims; role-Models that everyone can easily follow without harboring the slightest iota of doubt. They can be obeyed in all matters without the fainted shadow of reservation. For this reason, we must always remain eternally grateful for having received such a unique gift. We must never forget that if it were not for Almighty God's mercy, we too would have languished in endless ignorance and confusion like the millions of other people in this world; people who find themselves hopelessly divided into countless pointless groups, sects and creeds, and who have no idea how to

escape this predicament, nor have they anyone to guide them out of their utter misguidance. Based on these facts, *Ta'assī* (emulation) and *Iqtadā* (obedience) of these Immaculate Leaders (as) is not only correct and rational, but obligatory upon all of us.

Herein, we are faced with two queries which we must answer. The first question is:

During the life-time of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as), people were in their immediate midst and could observe them directly, hear their words and see their behavior day and night. As such, they could follow their every deed, emulate every facet of their thoughts, actions and speech. (We know that even during that era all the people did not follow and obey these godly personalities. Only those who had the good sense to understand, and then cherish these immaculate sages followed and emulated them, while others ignored their teachings and holy presence, and yet others persecuted them). However, today with the Imam of the Age (as) in occultation, we no longer have any direct access to the Holy Prophet (as) and the Immaculate Imams (as). As such, how is it possible for us to follow or emulate their words and deeds? If the Imam of the Age (as) had been present amongst us, we could have observed him directly and, thus, could have been able to obey his every utterance and direction. We could have precisely emulated his behavior and could have asked his opinions on matters that were not entirely clear to us or those which were subject to disagreement. Thus, the one and only correct path would have been illuminated, saving us from the many differences of opinion and understanding that currently plague our ranks. Unfortunately, the absence of

this *Ḥujjah*[1] (clear proof) and *Walī* (vice-regent) of God Almighty renders us incapable of observing and following him. We have no choice but to simply lament our loss and curse those who have, in the past and in the present, caused and perpetuated this agonizing absence of Almighty God's *Ḥujjah* (as).

In answer to the above question, it needs to be noted that even though we are currently unable to emulate the Immaculate Imams (as) directly, we can still do so indirectly. However, this does not represent a particularly crippling handicap. We may lack the undeniable benefits of active observation, but we can still draw a pretty lucid picture of their character and behavior through the large body of narrated records available to us today. By studying the *Aḥādith* (the narrated traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)), the *Sīrah* (their biographical accounts) and the chronicled history of their lives, we can achieve a relatively accurate picture of their personalities, teachings and conduct. Such research would allow us to form a mental portrait resembling, to a great degree, the reality we seek to capture without ever having met the individual personally. In conclusion, we shall find ourselves capable of emulating, with a high percentage of comparative confidence and surety, the image at hand.

The Alleged Impossibility of Following the Immaculate Imams (s) Today

The second question goes as follows:

1. One of the titles of the Last Imam (as).

Time and space make up two crucially essential factors within all reported actions of the Immaculate Imams (as). In fact, it is inherently erroneous to ignore these two vital elements of the puzzle when dealing with any case of proposed *Taqlīd*. Many acts may be possible within a certain time period, geographical setting or circumstance, while being impossible within another. Based on this principle, one can argue that the deeds of the Immaculate Imams (as) were fit for emulation, only until fifty or a hundred years from the time within which they themselves lived. Consequently, keeping in mind that a thousand and several hundred years have passed since their time, it must be concluded that their actions can no longer be emulated. For instance, horses and swords were used in battle during that period, while modern warfare involves modern weaponry, and there is no longer any place for steeds and scimitars in armed conflicts within our times. Similarly, houses and buildings in the said era were made of simple raw materials like mud and wood from date trees. Today, we no longer employ such medieval methods within construction.

During the Holy Prophet's (s) time, small and meager quarters were built around his mosque in Medina. These lodgings were primarily constructed for the wives of the Sacred Messenger (s) with only one exception, which belonged to Imam 'Alī (as). As time passed, these quarters were abandoned as people stopped living in them. This state of affairs continued until the reign of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, who decided to have the Mosque renovated and enlarged. As a result, the quarters were torn down and the land incorporated into the mosque itself. During this work, it became clear that these rooms had mud walls, with

ceilings made from date tree leaves. This was the condition of houses used by the Holy Prophet's (s) wives. Even the comparatively larger residences were not much better off, with the only difference being that their mud walls were plastered with clay. People who lived in these lodgings would spread pieces of animal skin on the ground so as to lay down grass on them for their sheep to eat. Only a few of these houses had camels which were used to pull out water from wells. Now, keeping in mind that the residential apartments of the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam 'Alī (as), the leaders and rulers of their time, were like this, is it possible for us to follow their example and start living in such places today?

A group of individuals proclaim that it is no longer possible for us to emulate the Immaculate Imams (as), since the lives of these Imams (as) were relevant only within the time periods and geographical settings within which they themselves lived. With times having changed, and circumstances drastically transformed, the said actions are now redundant and, therefore, inimitable. Today, it cannot be claimed that Lady Fāṭimah Zahrā (as), who lived fourteen hundred years ago, represents an ideal role-model for modern women. Any such claim, and the assertion that her example must be followed today, is unrealistic and impractical.

In debunking this hypothesis, we need only point out that the Holy Qurān clearly commands us to emulate the Blessed Messenger (s) in the most unambiguous fashion. It states:

﴿لَّقَدۡ كَانَ لَكُمۡ فِي رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسۡوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرۡجُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلۡيَوۡمَ ٱلۡأٓخِرَ وَذَكَرَ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرٗا﴾

"There is certainly a good example (standard and ideal role-model) for you in the Apostle of Allah - for those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day, and remember Allah much."[1]

This Qurānic verse in question does not restrict the Holy Prophet's (s) role as an ideal exemplar for mankind in any way. According to it, his example is relevant in all places, at all times and for all people. Apart from this, numerous authentic narrated traditions convey the same meaning. However, despite the explicit instructions of the Holy Qurān and the *aḥādith* about our duty in emulating Almighty God's apostles and saints, we would still wish to explore the idea of such emulation a bit further. Let us discover how many different realms exist in this emulation and what our natural intellect tells us about following others in the various dimensions of our lives.

The Various Realms of *Taqlīd* or Emulation

a) The Realm of Beliefs

One of the realms of *Taqlīd* or emulation, wherein people can follow others, is the realm of beliefs, ideas, intellectual issues, theories and convictions. Some foundational principles of belief are logically inimitable. These must be personally studied, scrutinized and understood through

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Aḥzāb: 21.

rational reasoning. *Tawhīd,* or the belief regarding the absolute oneness and existential unity of God Almighty is one such principle. It can be permissibly established only through logical argumentation, while *Taqlīd* is utterly inadmissible in the attainment of this key belief. However, other ideas and convictions are not of a similar nature. In fact, some of them consist of propositions that lie beyond the intellect's analytical abilities and, thus, they cannot be proved or disproved by argumentation and philosophical reasoning. The Islamic belief regarding what spiritual events take place during the first night after a person's death represents an example of such teachings. Herein, we have no choice but to indulge in *Taqlīd* (though this is not the same as the *Taqlīd* we come across in Islamic jurisprudence, which actually constitutes an academic term and signifies the act of obeying the jurisprudential edicts of a fully qualified *Faqīh* or jurist). By *Taqlīd* in this context we mean the colloquial sense of the word. An instance of this is the intellectual emulation that takes place when someone adheres to the teachings of the Immaculate Imams (as) and considers them as true. This connotation of the word corresponds to the concept of "imitation" that occurs in several places within psychology and sociology; a concept that is much broader when compared to the idea of jurisprudential imitation discussed briefly above. This is the same comprehensive meaning of *Taqlīd* which encompasses all instances wherein lay-men turn to certified experts to solve their problems. An ill individual going to see a doctor, contacting a civil engineer or architect when constructing a house or building etc. all fall under this category.

Therefore, the authenticity of beliefs that are inherently unprovable by way of direct intellectual argumentation can, in fact, be indirectly established through accepting whatever is reported about them within already authenticated sources such as the Holy Qurān and the *aḥādith* of the Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as). These beliefs, in turn, become part of what we perceive as definite reality, because we have received them from previously validated sources. To explain how this happens, we need to understand that if we are asked to believe something which the intellect cannot independently verify, we can only do so if the information under scrutiny was delivered to us via infallible channels. If this happens, we can acknowledge the given information as truth without any reservation whatsoever, and this data will subsequently become a part of our belief system. As such, God Almighty did a great favor to us by granting us the ultimate in infallible sources i.e. the Holy Prophet (s) alongside his Immaculate Family (as). The behavior and teachings of these divinely chosen and rightly-guided individuals bear absolute authenticity and irrefutable probative value.

Evidently, any information that reaches us claiming to hold such undeniable worth must first be thoroughly checked. The report itself must be semantically clear, with its words conveying a denotation and connotation that is not ambiguous in any way. Furthermore, we must confirm that the narration actually belongs of the Holy Prophet (s) or one of the Immaculate Members of his Family (as). For this very purpose, well-established and fool-proof methods are made available by various sciences that specialize in examining the veracity of narrated traditions. If all the

pieces of the puzzle fit in, we will discover the opinion of one, or several, of the Immaculates (as) with reference to a certain issue. This opinion, due to the absolute nature of its probative strength, will therefore become our solemn belief. In short, any narration that seeks to report doctrinal fact will only be admissible if its authenticity can be fully established. On the other hand, the level of admissibility, if any, of singular and isolated reports is highly debatable.

Once accepted as objective facts, doctrinal truths of this kind become permanent parts of Islamic teachings. Any change in time, place, circumstance, alongside all transformations in man's material existence cannot affect the status of these beliefs. Just as the most fundamental belief in Almighty God's oneness, proven purely through irrefutable logic, cannot be tampered with based on alterations within mankind's temporal or spatial conditions, so are all other beliefs immune to any such tampering, provided that they be objectively established through purely intellectual pieces of evidence or authentic forms of narrated proof. For instance, Islam teaches us that two of Almighty God's angels, named *Munkir* and *Nakīr*, visit the deceased during their first night in the grave. This information was given to us, irrefutably, by the most infallible of human sources i.e. the Messenger of Allah (s). As a result, no amount of change or transformation within human society can adversely affect the veracity of this idea. Similarly, the fact that the report in question was originally delivered to us fourteen hundred years ago can have no bearing on its authenticity. It speaks of realities that are metaphysical in nature and do not change with changes that take place in the material realm.

In summary, as far as the realm of belief is concerned, it is academically untrue to claim that a distance of fourteen hundred years has rendered the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s) and Immaculate Imams (as) obsolete and inimitable for mankind in the modern world.

b) The Realm of Essential Values

Another realm where people may choose to follow others is the realm of essential values; what must be done and what must never be done, what is good and what constitutes evil. Although these matters may fall into a broader meaning of the word "beliefs", they are often separated from the latter both within academic terminology and colloquial usage. As such, beliefs and morals are normally regarded as two diverse fields of study.

When speaking of values, there exist certain ethical principles which the human intellect can perceive and derive independently. In order to recognize them, the intellect works alone and does not require any help from any external sources of knowledge such as *Waḥī* (or revelation). This kind of perceptual data is called *Mustaqillāt-i 'Aqlīyah* or independent intellectual derivations. Herein, it must be noted that by "the intellect" we mean pure and unadulterated intelligence, not an idiomatic form of reasoning that is commonly taken to be purely intellectual. Amongst the hallmarks of a purely intellectual form of cognition is that it yields results which are universally unanimous, and not subject to any difference of opinion. Obviously, if a certain moral precept is arrived at, conclusively, by the intellect in the above stated manner, then we would no longer need a

role-model with reference to that particular value, nor would we require *Taqlīd*. Whatever the intellect decisively identifies as "good" will be deemed so by us, and whatever it classifies as "evil" will similarly be accepted without reservation. Even within Islamic jurisprudence, the *Mustaqillāt-i 'Aqlīyah* or independent intellectual derivations are considered *Ḥujjah* and, therefore, command irrefutable probative value. Even in jurisprudence, we acknowledge the findings of the intellect and deem them to be *Ḥujjah* or "competent proof" even before a *Faqīh* (or jurist) begins his exploration of the available narrated data.

On the other hand, there exist values and ethical principles which the intellect is incapable of forming a decisive opinion on. In these cases we require the assistance of authentic sources in order to differentiate between "good" and "bad". It is here that the issue of *Taqlīd* comes up, and we, as Muslims, find it necessary to follow the example and teachings of the Holy Prophet (s) and his Immaculate Family (as). In this context, moral standards given to us by divine revelation and Almighty God's apostles, constitute precepts that are universal.

Nevertheless, we need to appreciate that identifying universal values with complete certainty is not as easy as doing the same within the realm of beliefs. Classical Greek sophists and sceptics believed that there was no such thing as definitive, objective or permanent knowledge, a conviction shared by 20th and 21st century pseudo-philosophers. However, an overwhelmingly vast majority of intellectuals throughout history have rejected the said opinion, forcefully reiterating that definitive, permanent and certain knowledge can and does exist

within the realms of objective science and ontological beliefs. As examples, they present the laws and core principles of Mathematics, Pure Logic and Metaphysics, all of which constitute indisputable facts. Similarly, as we mentioned earlier, such facts can also be attained from a series of established and infallible sources other than the intellect e.g. the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s) and his Immaculate Progeny (as). Nevertheless, things are much more complicated when it comes to essential values and moral precepts. People who do believe in the possibility of objective knowledge are at odds with one another about whether or not such definitude can occur within the sphere of morality and ethics. As a result, some of them adhere to moral relativism, claiming that ethical principles are not universal and permanent in nature. They believe in the existential unity of Almighty God's entity, understanding this to be a universal and constant instance of knowledge. They also believe in the Day of Judgment, based on authentic and adequate narrated proof. However, they dispute the proposition that if a certain thing is "good" or "bad" in a particular time period or setting, it will remain so in all time periods and circumstances. They hold "good" and "bad" to be relative concepts i.e. "good" and "bad" change in relation to a wide range of changes within their contextual scenarios, changes that may include social, geographic, economic, ideological, demographic, sexual, historical and chronological factors. Based on this theory, it is impossible to define universal standards of ethical behavior and, consequently, following a version of ethical values that existed fourteen hundred years ago make no sense at all.

A complete and thorough critique of moral relativism falls within the academic parameters of the Philosophy of Ethics; an explanation which we will not dwell into within this current discourse. Instead, we will only outline our own conviction in this regard. Based on the teachings of the Holy Qurān, the Sacred Messenger (s) and the Infallible Imams (as), teachings which are authentic and considered *Ḥujjah* (or competent proof), we understand that certain principles of morality are indeed immutable and universal. They do not change or lose their validity over time or relative to contextual alterations. For instance, tyranny has always been bad and will always remain so, whereas justice has always been good and will not cease to be so. As you can see, certain values are just like their counterparts within the realm of beliefs, undergoing no changes over time and remaining permanent under all conditions. As the belief in God Almighty stays unaltered by changes in time and space, so do certain instances of ethics and morals. Therefore, when we try to adhere to such universal and permanent moral tenets, following the example of Almighty God's apostles, who lived fourteen hundred years ago, does not create any problems. By adopting their teachings, we gain access to divinely revealed knowledge which, in turn, helps us discover the immutable principles we were looking for.

Having grasped the above, we must also acknowledge that sometimes change does occur, within a prescribed framework, in some types of moral values. For instance, "honesty" is generally "good", while being "bad" under certain circumstances e.g. if an expression of truth were to result in the murder of an innocent individual, then such an expression would in fact be considered "bad".

Similarly, "dishonesty" is generally "bad", while being "good", or even obligatory, under circumstances wherein the life of an innocent person depends on it. Thus, change can occur in some instance of ethical values. However, this change is not caused by alterations within time and other contextual factors; it is the direct reflection of the core criteria that is at work behind the value in question. In reality, if we were to derive the entire body of criteria that forms the very constitution of a given value, we would discover that even these apparently variable values are, in fact, constant in nature.

In short, when dealing with ethical principles and values wherein our intellect cannot independently draw a conclusive decision, we can compensate by following and emulating the teachings bestowed upon us by divine revelation, and the example set for us by Infallible Guides (as) whom God Almighty sent alongside His sacred Word.

c) The Realm of Methodology

The third realm wherein *Taqlīd* is possible is the realm of methods, techniques and practical ways with which people achieve meaningful goals. We set goals for our lives based on the values and beliefs that we subscribe to. For devout Muslims, the ultimate goal is to achieve absolute spiritual proximity with God Almighty or *Liqā Allah*, and thereby become a perfect human being or *Insān-i Kāmil*. In this journey towards a final objective, there exist numerous intermediary goals that help us progress in our quest. Obviously, achieving this final goal requires the application of a collection of specific techniques. Some of these techniques can be discovered through intellectual

exploration, analysis and argumentation. Others may be understood through practical experience and conclusive experimentation. In summary, we do not require any kind of emulation or *Taqlīd* as far as these discoverable methods were concerned.

However, sometimes we lack the ability to find adequate techniques. This might be due to insufficient experience or inconclusive experimentation. At other times, a fundamental lack of intellectual capability may form an impediment, impairing us from finding the methods we require. As such, we have no choice but to learn the necessary techniques from reliable sources outside our own selves.

"Security" is a core value within communal life. The creation, maintenance, and preservation of security, is necessary within individual and social life. Security must be provided at all times for society to function properly. It insecurity prevails, the very fabric of society will be torn apart, nothing will work as people will find themselves lacking peace and tranquility. However, the methodology of sustaining this desirable social state differs from time to time, and from context to context. For example, during the era of the Immaculate Imams (as), the methods used for conserving law and order were quite simple, with relatively small numbers of people working to attain this objective. Today, in stark contrast, the maintenance of law and order within our cities requires a vast and complex infrastructure, manned by a whole army of policemen and other officials, equipped with intricate mechanisms, professionally trained in the most sophisticated techniques and furnished with large amounts of finances. In reality, the drastic disparity between these two eras is a direct

result of the colossal changes that have occurred within the social circumstances that exist in human society. In modern times, security cannot be maintained without such a massive effort. The same is true for other arms of governance within a modern state.

During the early Islamic period, the central government would appoint a single person as governor to manage an entire province. Sometimes, this governor would be accompanied by an honest minister in-charge to handle the public purse, and a Qurānic scholar entrusted with the population's education and training. These three individuals would work with one another to run a whole province or city. Today, even a small village cannot be managed by just three people let alone an entire city, which requires several fully-equipped administrative departments, each with its own policies, plans, jurisdiction, man-power and budgets. All this is the result and consequence of huge and unprecedented changes within human life that have occurred in contemporary times. Given this situation, can anyone claim that we should administer our cities and countries like Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (as) used to do in his era? Can it be claimed that if we wish to setup a truly Islamic government, following the example of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as), then we should immediately dissolve all the ministries, departments and services that exist today? Obviously, such a claim would be deemed ridiculous. Following and emulating the Sacred Messenger (s) and his infallible progeny (as) does not mean ignoring the social conditions that exist within the contemporary world.

The most complicated aspect of the query which questions the possibility of following individuals who lived a millennium ago is in fact, related to this very discussion. Rebutting the said criticism vis-à-vis beliefs and ethical values is far easier than dealing with it in relation to the realm of methods and techniques. This is because beliefs relate to our perception of objective reality and, thus, remain stable and constant over time. Similarly, when observed alongside the entire body of the criteria that constitutes them, ethical values also remain permanent, with time exerting no influence on them. Although, various sects, religions and ideologies differ with regards to what constitute essential values and ethics, we have ignored this disparity simply because we seek to discuss the issue at hand from the shared perspective of people who adhere to a single religion or school of thought. Major differences of opinion with reference to these beliefs and values are rarely found amongst them. But when it comes of methods, strategies, techniques, and generally anything that deals with our daily lives, identifying immutable and permanent practices can be very difficult. Consequently, outlining the admissible parameters for *Taqlīd* in this area, proves to be wrought with abundant hardship.

Some methods fall under the jurisdiction of Islamic jurisprudence. Therefore, the general law related to their permissibility needs to be determined through *Ijtihād* (meaning "practical jurisprudence" within this context). Subsequently, they must be made available to the relevant segment of society which will, in turn, follow the edicts of the expert jurists involved. For instance, the question about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of various forms of

taxation is a jurisprudential inquiry. A *Faqīh* or qualified Islamic jurist must look into the matter, researching it within the canonical sources of Islamic law, so as to see whether an Islamic state is permitted to levy taxes upon the incomes of its citizens. He must study the Qurān and the *aḥādith* in order to derive a verdict regarding the legality of additional types of taxation over and above those levied originally by God Almighty and His Sacred Messenger (s) i.e. the *Khums* (constituting 20 % of one's annual net savings) and the *Zakāt* (obligatory poor-dues deducted from various forms of agricultural holding, as well as gold and silver coins). Some individuals have claimed that any such taxes run contrary to Islamic law. In contrast, however, the majority view held by Islamic jurists, or the *Fuqahā*, declares this kind of taxation to be permissible. They have come to this outcome by studying the authentic biographical accounts of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as), and have seen that the Immaculates (as) did indeed allow such financial tools to be employed if the funds accumulated through *Khums* and *Zakāt* failed to satisfy the needs of the Islamic nation and government.

Other methods have nothing to do with Islamic jurisprudence. In order to devise these practical tools, one requires expertise other than that needed within the field of Islamic law and jurisprudence. One may need an advanced level of scholarship within sociology, politics or other sciences that influence human life. For instance, International Politics forms a most crucial aspect of modern governance and inter-state relations. The establishment, form and extent of relations that a certain country should have with other countries, is an

indispensable field of knowledge and expertise. Without it, the modern state cannot function because, in contemporary times, no country can exist in isolation from the rest of the world, drawing an iron wall around itself and shutting itself off from the international arena. Methods related to this sphere of activities are highly complicated and involve intricate procedures intertwined with one another. Consequently, one cannot simply claim that in order to satisfy our need for methodology in this area, we should just follow the example of the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam 'Alī (as) when they dealt with other nations during their time periods. This is because conditions have drastically changed, resembling nothing of what existed in that era, and we must now employ practices that suit the current international scenario. One of the vital issues concerning the Islamic world today is the plight of the Palestinians, and the inhuman oppression they face at the hands of American supported Zionist occupiers. A brutally oppressed nation, subjected to the most terrifying forms of tyrannical suppression, struggle relentlessly to preserve their Islamic values and national identity. Year after year, their homes are illegally razed and their ancestral land usurped, while they helplessly watch. Men, young and old, and even women and children are made to face an unending blitz of bullets, giving martyr after martyr in their resistance against tyranny. Now, the question arises: What is our responsibility towards them? Is it possible for us to help them by sending them money, supplies, weapons and soldiers? Indeed, understanding and deriving the ways and manners of effectively helping them today is no small task. It requires professional deliberation. It is not as simple as just picking out a narrated tradition and doing whatever it says,

believing this to be our obligation. We need to be adequately equipped in at least two separate fields of academic learning. In both these areas, lay-men have no choice but to refer to the experts and foremost scholars who specialize within those particular fields of study.

The first of these necessary lines of expertise is the science of Islamic jurisprudence. Unfortunately, very little jurisprudential research and work has gone into the various kinds of newly emerging problems facing the Islamic nation. Issues dealing with public administration have remained insufficiently addressed within Islamic jurisprudential studies. Certainly, the sheer scope and staggering complexity of matters related to government and public management demand that an extraordinary level of jurisprudential attention is invested into these crucial issues.

The second field of necessary learning pertains to all sciences dealing with politics, sociology and other branches of research that directly affect human society. It is naïve to think that by jurisprudence alone, and by deriving generalized verdicts, we can arrive at a sufficient understanding of our responsibility. To begin with, a precise comprehension of the subjects of jurisprudential rulings, which need to be meticulously understood in order to arrive at a correct verdict, alone requires specializations and expertise in an ever-increasing list of sciences. For instance, if a jurist wants to rule on a certain political issue, he must first be able to discern precisely what that issue constitutes. This, undoubtedly, requires him to be an expert within the field of Political Science or to follow someone who already is. As such, in issues such as these, the edicts of all *Fuqahā* or Islamic jurists cease to be valid,

and we cannot follow a jurist who lacks the necessary political expertise. Only the views of a *Faqīh*, equipped with the proper understanding of politics will thus be considered admissible. This too would only be true if the said *Faqīh* had issued the said verdict by actively employing his political knowledge. For instance, can we gauge what our responsibility to the people of Palestine is by simply looking into the *Risālah* (or compilation of jurisprudential rulings) of a *Faqīh*? Does any *Risālah* tell us what to do in this regard? Even is a particular *Faqīh* or Islamic jurist, through painstaking research within jurisprudential sources, were to come up with a verdict on the said matter, this verdict would still be general in nature and would not tell us the means we must employ in order to get the task done. To find out what methods we need to employ to solve the problem in question, we would still have to turn to other experts within the relevant fields of knowledge and learning.

Just as we are duty bound to consult the most learned Islamic jurist (or *A'lim*) in matters pertaining to Islamic law and religious doctrine, so are we obliged to follow a *Faqīh* who fully comprehends politics in matter related to this area of life. However, if such a *Faqīh* cannot be found, then it will be our responsibility to attain general verdicts related to jurisprudence from Islamic jurists, while following the opinions of a just and pious politician in matters related to the world of politics. Obviously, in such a case, it would not be required of the politician to be the foremost scholar in Islamic jurisprudence as well. Being just and pious, alongside a sufficient know-how of Islamic law, would suffice. In short, within political issues, we are duty-bound to follow someone who, firstly,

displays an adequate degree of justice and piety, and secondly, holds expertise within the field of politics.

History proved that the late Imam Khumaynī (ra) was not only an unsurpassed *Faqīh* but also an expert politician. Similarly, the current leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khāmeneī, commands total proficiency in both these areas of expertise. The late Imam (ra), after having spent a lifetime researching Islamic jurisprudence, would speak to the people in a manner that left even the most skilled politicians spell-bound. Even the American president at that time would put his regular schedule on hold to listen to the broadcasted speeches of this great man. It has been reported that the American head of state once remarked that the American government was at a complete loss in foreseeing what the Imam (ra) was going to do or say. Summing it up, people can easily refer to, and follow the *Fuqahā* in matters of politics, just as they do in matters of regular jurisprudence, because, by the grace of God, we do have Islamic jurists who enjoy an unrivaled degree of specialization in both areas of study.

It is again naïve to claim that the Immaculates (as) have only instructed us to emulate the *Fuqahā* (or the jurists) and not the politicians. This is because, firstly, the said instructions were given while only keeping jurisprudential issues in mind, and secondly, the narrated instructions of the Immaculates (as) do not form the only piece of proof legitimizing *Taqlīd*. The intellect independently confirms the admissibility of this action and, as such, does not restrict it to jurisprudential matters and to jurists alone. In the light of undeniable intellectual proof, lay-men are obliged to refer to experts in all matters wherein they themselves lack adequate knowledge. Thus, we see that

when a *Faqīh* issues an edict deeming it impermissible to fast if it poses a threat to one's health, we accept this verdict and follow the *Faqīh*'s opinion. However, to see whether or not a person is practically subject to the contents of this edict, and thus not allowed to fast, he or she must refer to a doctor, who through the application of his expertise will diagnose whether or not fasting is harmful for him or her. Therefore, we attain the general Islamic ruling from a *Faqīh*, while understanding what constitutes, or does not constitute, a subject for this general ruling from an expert who specializes in the field relevant to that particular subject matter. Evidently, if we were to find a *Faqīh* who also happened to be a specialized doctor, then would not need to refer to two different people in our given case.

d) The Realm of Tools and Apparatus

The fourth realm within which *Taqlīd* may occur is the one dealing with the tools that people use to meet their various practical requirements. These include the types of clothes they wear, as well as the items and utensils that they use daily. To procure these objects of our need, we can effectively refer to anyone who has the ability to provide them to us. For instance, in order to establish successful communication ties with other nations, we need to learn and gain a working level of proficiency in their respective languages. As such, we are compelled to imitate their manner of speaking and conversation. In order to talk to Arabs, we need educate ourselves in the Arabic language, and if we seek to converse with the British, then we must learn English. Therefore, when it comes to bare tools, objects lacking any cultural or ideological baggage,

we can easily turn towards any given individual who has the capability of furnishing us with what we need. Thus, we engage in a form of *Taqlīd* in relation to this person supplying us with our required goods. Someone wishing to learn the English language is not necessarily obliged to do so by referring himself to a pious or devout teacher, he can even sit in classes taught by people who are not even Muslim. Obviously, rules of social interaction, and the restrictions that apply therein, would still be relevant. What we are talking about now pertains specifically to learning a language, merely as a bare tool, and nothing else. For this purpose, and this purpose alone, we are allowed to seek help from any capable person. Similarly, other tools and apparatuses needed in daily life, like televisions and cars etc., can be imported from foreign countries. This is permissible because these tools, in themselves, bear no hidden cultural or ideological baggage. They are just tools that may be used in any way we may choose. Although, sometimes certain external considerations, like political ones, may render it impermissible to import goods from certain foreign entities e.g. the illegal and criminal Zionist entity that occupies the land of Palestine.

To summarize, today we are deprived of an access to the Immaculate Imams (as) and cannot inquire about what techniques to employ in these current times in order to fulfil our various needs. We do, however, have ample access to the *Walī-i Faqīh* (or guardian jurisprudent), who is not only a specialist within the field of Islamic jurisprudence but also specializes in politics and all other areas of vital competence which a society needs in order to function correctly. By following his guidance, and doing

Taqlīd of his verdicts, we can come as close to the views of an Immaculate Imams (as) as is possible during the age of occultation. Indeed, following him constitutes an indirect way of emulating the Imams (as) themselves. A *Walī-i Faqīh* (or guardian jurisprudent) must be a fully qualified *Faqīh* (or Islamic jurist), but apart from that he must also be an expert administrator, an acute strategist and a specialist at politics and governance. Moreover, he must display the finest levels of virtue, piety and godliness, and conduct himself with unquestionable justice at all times. Therefore, he commands full proficiency in all crucial areas of knowledge needed to run the Islamic community at a strategic and macro-managerial level. Additionally, he also has at his disposal all forms of skilled and honest advisors who can brief him on subjects and topics that lie outside the scope of his know-how.

So, given this explanation, the criticism related to doing *Taqlīd* in current times is proven to be incorrect.

LECTURE FIVE
WHY RELIGION IS CALLED INTO QUESTION

Anti-Religious Propaganda is a Result of Incompetent Political Policies

Our motivation in speaking at length about the extremely important issue of *Taqlīd* stemmed from the fact that certain individuals consider *Taqlīd* a reprehensible act in all its forms. In their view, all people enjoy an adequate level of intellectual competence and ability, and can therefore fully distinguish between right and wrong in all cases without having any need to consult others.

If such judgmental reviews of the idea of *Taqlīd* were articulated by common people, out of a lack of knowledge, one could easily fix the problem by clarifying and explaining the concepts involved. However, what transpires today is not an innocent query uttered by some uninformed individuals, but rather a well-planned malicious plot designed with criminal intent. The aim of this organized scheme is to discredit religion and disparage the sacred ideas which are sacrosanct to Muslim society. Furthermore, this plot to secularize Muslim life is executed with full collaboration between the neo-colonial powers and other sworn enemies of Islam. This is why they do not just attack the concept of *Taqlīd*, but their targets are much broader in nature, including almost all the teachings of religion. Simultaneously, our current observation of such affairs leads us to appreciate the incredible foresight and socio-political acumen of the

Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khāmeneī. Twenty years ago, it was he who warned us about an imminent cultural invasion and raised the alarm against a budding conspiracy that would, in the future, threaten all our sacred religious and revolutionary principles. At that time, many people, including the elite sections of society, were unable to comprehend the magnitude of the conspiracy being hatched. However, today the scope of this cultural offensive has become crystal clear, as we bear witness to open attacks against our religion and national culture, in the very light of day, by an army of agents working for neo-colonial imperialists.

Things have descended to such a depth that, under the patronage of lax, irresponsible and incompetent political policies, religious sanctities are openly insulted and ridiculed, while the most explicit commandments of Islam are shamelessly denied and repudiated. When an ignorant woman remarked, "Today our role model is Oshin[1] and not Fāṭimah Zahrā (as)", the late Imam Khumaynī (ra) had declared, "If this woman had uttered these words with full comprehension of what she was saying, then surely she would have been an apostate." By expressing these words, the Imam (ra) vaccinated society against such malignant ideas. However, today blasphemy has become so common that our ears have grown used to hearing it, and we express no sensitivity, nor display any reaction, whenever we come across such instances. Worse still, we even find certain government officials and notable people articulating similar thoughts.

1. A popular character in a foreign TV serial.

The Gradual Process of Discrediting Religion

The faction trying to overthrow the Islamic system has employed a variety of strategies in the course of their campaign against sacred ideals. One of their techniques involves a slow and gradual escalation within anti-religious attacks. At first they only criticize minor, peripheral and less controversial religious teachings. When these are accepted or tolerated within society, the ground for questioning even the most central, religious doctrines is provided. In our earlier discourse, we presented a Qurānic psychological analysis of how some devout people slowly move towards becoming total disbelievers. Based on the same analysis, we observe that when an individual finds it difficult to act according to certain religious laws, his internal *self* or ego entices him towards transgression and disobedience. Thus, he starts questioning the edicts of the *Mujtahidīn* (Islamic jurisprudents) and says that they are devoid of any credibility. To convince himself further he cites for himself the minor disagreements that exist within the edicts of the *Marāji'* (supreme referral authorities of Islamic law). For him, these minute disagreements are enough to show that all edicts are unreliable. If he is told that the *Mujtahadīn* do not issue edicts based on whims and fancies, but do so based upon the narrated traditions and biographical accounts of the Immaculates (as), he starts questioning the veracity of the said narrations and biographies as well. He declares that since there exist both authentic and unauthentic narrations, one cannot be sure that the *Mujtahid* in question has used the authentic ones in deriving his own verdict. Subsequently, once he is informed that the *Mujtahid* had indeed employed only the

most authentic traditions in forming his final opinion, our skeptic responds by calling the words of the Immaculates (as) into question. He proclaims that since the words and deeds of the Immaculate Imams (as) are deemed authoritative only by the Shia, while the Sunni do not consider them to bear probative value, therefore, there is no surety as to the veracity of these words or deeds anyway. "After all", he remarks, "How do we know that the teachings and opinions of the Immaculate Imams (as) were right in the first place."

On the other hand, if it becomes known that the *Mujtahid* had only used the Holy Qurān while deriving the edict under scrutiny, our doubter immediately hits back by questioning the said scholar's understanding of the Qurān. He says, "There exist several interpretations of the Qurānic text and, thus, there is no certainty that the meanings understood by the *Mujtahidīn* and *Marāji'* were, in fact, the correct ones." However, if his rebuttal is dismissed because it turns out that the Qurānic verse in question is absolutely explicit in its connotation, and that all people who know the Arabic language draw only one meaning from its words, then he simply responds by expressing doubt about the authenticity of the Holy Qurān itself. "How do we know that the Qurān constitutes Almighty God’s words."

These days a group of people claim that the Holy Qurān is not the word of God Almighty, but a series of interpretations drawn from divine revelation by the Prophet (s) himself. From their standpoint, *Wahī* or divine revelation is an experience lacking actual words or meanings. The Prophet (s) constructs ideas and words out of this experience and presents them to the people.

Therefore, a collection of these words is, in fact, the Prophet's (s) own speech and not that of God Almighty. Additionally, since the Prophet (s) is merely human, and human beings are prone to error, thus his statements are naturally prone to inaccuracies as well. As a consequence, his teachings are neither immutable nor completely dependable.

Even if it were proven that the Holy Qurān is, indeed, the word of God Almighty, and not that of the Prophet (s), our obdurate cynic would just take the next step in his obstinate vendetta against religion and deny the fidelity of Almighty God's speech as well. This actually occurred in one of our universities when a professor of theology stated, "Even if we assume that the Qurān is the very speech of God Almighty, there is still a possibility that God Almighty may have lied to us in His speech." These people even have a theory rationalizing this ludicrous idea. They state that, first of all, "good", "bad", "true" and "false" are all entirely arbitrary concepts. In addition, they note that there also exists such a thing as "justifiable falsehood", wherein an act of dishonesty is perpetrated for the great good of an individual or society in general. As such, they state that God Almighty could have lied in such a justifiable manner.

This is an example of the process which Satan uses to turn man away from the path of truth and guidance. In this manner, step by step, he draws a person away from faith and towards disbelief. It actually represents the outcome faced by individuals and groups who choose to forsake the *Wilāyah* (or authority) of God Almighty and adopt the *Wilāyah* of Satan instead. Someone who embraces Satan's *Wilāyah* allows the latter to gain complete control over

himself, pulling him along in any direction that pleases his new master, until finally the person in question ends up in Hellfire.

﴿إِنَّمَا سُلۡطَٰنُهُۥ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوۡنَهُۥ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم بِهِۦ مُشۡرِكُونَ﴾

"His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner [of Allah]."[1]

For his own purposes, Satan has at his disposal an entire troupe of agents, working 24/7 to execute his foul plans. Each agent is delegated to execute a certain portion of the grander scheme. This way, they work in synergy, trying to deceive Almighty God's servants and lead them astray.

﴿قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغۡوِيَنَّهُمۡ أَجۡمَعِينَ﴾

"He (Satan) said (addressing God), 'By Your might, I will surely pervert them'…"[2]

In the words of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khāmeneī, our enemies have targeted the hearts of our youngsters. They are spreading doubts about religion along a full spectrum of issues. They begin by questioning the viability of following the verdicts and opinions of a *Jāmi al-Sharā'it Faqīh* (a fully qualified Islamic jurisprudent), and from there, they keep increasing the stakes until finally suggest that it is essentially impossible to draw a single correct understanding of the

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Naḥl: 100.
2. The Holy Qurān, Ṣād: 82.

Holy Qurān and narrated traditions. For substantiating the latter of these claims, they invoke the theory of hermeneutics, whereby the Holy Qurān and narrated traditions have a host of disagreeing interpretations, none of which can be preferred over the other. Another method used by them to rationalize the same proposition involves the application of a hypothesis within the subject of the Philosophy of Religion. According to this hypothesis, the language of religion and religious texts is considered a language which inherently does not seek to represent objective reality. As such, the words of the Holy Qurān and narrated traditions are also devoid of any direct connection with the actual world. In any case, they utilize all arguments and paralogistic fallacies that they can find within the science of Qurānic Study in order to instill doubt into the hearts of our younger generation, and thus lead them away from correct guidance. They have been so effective in their efforts that, within these past few years, after the Islamic Revolution, they have succeeded in misleading certain personalities which we would never have imagined could be misdirected in such a short span of time. Therefore, we must remain fully alert, preserve our own faith and belief, and then go forward to protect our young generation from deviations within their religious convictions.

Questioning the Admissibility of Following Religious Leaders

Taqlīd, in which people choose to imitate unqualified individuals as their role-models in life, constitutes nothing but a blind act totally devoid of justification. For instance, when people start blindly following their ancestors, sports

heroes or movie stars, they are actually engaged in an unacceptable and "monkey-like" imitation and certain individuals try to attribute their characteristics to all forms of emulation. When *Taqlīd* takes place with the intention of seeking out truth and following reality, it constitutes an instance of lay-men referring to experts in order to gain knowledge, or utilize skills, that they themselves lack. As such, *Taqlīd* represents the most natural, inescapable and logical of actions, without which society would effectively descend into chaos. Based upon this same principle, we are required to follow the example of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in all aspects of our lives. Such emulation is also called *Taassī*, which signifies an emulation of someone else's actions only.

Two criticisms are leveled against the validity of *Taassī* of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). The first states: assuming the correctness of such emulation in general, it can only be admissible when a certain action is present before the eyes of a student so that he or she might learn from it and, thus, be able to mold his or her own behavior to match the deed in question. Keeping this in mind, the actions of people who lived fourteen hundred years ago and are no longer observable today cannot be considered appropriate for any such emulation.

To answer this piece of criticism, we must state that even though we are currently unable to observe the actions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) directly, we are still capable of learning what their manners were like during their respective life-times. Our current incapability stems from the occultation of the Imam of Our Age (as), which continues due to the actions of those who have caused it to happen. In fact, the concept of "imitation" found within

psychology is not exclusive to imitating the Immaculate Imams (as). Obviously, an Infallible Imam (as) can be an ideal role-model, but since society is deprived of such an absolute example, it must find someone who stands above all others in terms of knowledge, piety and spirituality. Such a person would effectively bear the greatest possible degree of resemblance to an Immaculate Imam (as). We can, therefore, make this individual our role-model in life.

Secondly, *Taqlīd*, in its broader sense, is not limited to emulating directly observed actions. Even though we cannot see the Immaculate Imams (as) today, we can research their lives by studying their *aḥādith* and biographical accounts. By doing so, we can follow and emulate their actions in our practical lives.

The second criticism states that even after acknowledging the need for role-models in any given system of training, it is still incorrect to consider the actions of people who lived fourteen hundred years ago as appropriate role-models for us today. Their deeds could have been perfect examples within their own era, but they simply cannot be deemed adequate or suitable for current times, since almost all the contextual conditions have gone through colossal changes.

In the above stated criticism, these propagandists want to fool the audience into thinking that all the actions of the Imams (as) are now obsolete and redundant within contemporary society. For instance, they remark that the dowry of Lady Fāṭimah Zahrā (as) consisted of clay pots and utensils, whereas no one uses such items as dowry in today's world. Likewise, they mention that, according to historical records, houses were built of mud walls with

date-tree branches and leaves for roofs, whereas such construction cannot be found even within the ghettos and shanty towns of our times. Thus, the life styles of these personalities cannot be considered compatible and imitable within modern society.

The fallacy is so utterly obvious. By citing a few fringe examples wherein the lives of the Immaculates (as) are not imitable within modern times, they seek to reject the entirety of religion, saying that the Immaculates (as) and their deeds have become outdated and must therefore be dismissed as so. Simultaneously, they invite us, ever so predictably, towards following the so-called developed world, imitating their every act so that we too may become *civilized*. This emulation, however, can never be deemed as incorrect (because in it they ask us to follow their masters), because it is the source of all progress and development!

The Idea that Religion and the Actions of the Apostles Had an Expiry Date

The skeptics proclaim that not only is it illogical to follow the *Marāji'* (supreme referral authorities within Islamic jurisprudence) but also to follow the Immaculate Imams (as) themselves. In their view, the teachings of these sacred personalities may have been valid for their own times, within the exact conditions that prevailed in their original social settings, but have reached their expiry date. Today, these teachings are not only invalid, but may even be dangerous and harmful. Therefore, they must be disposed of immediately just like expired medicine needs to be thrown away. If adequate measures are not taken to prevent the dissemination such widespread disinformation,

soon these ideas will turn into social norms, leaving all sacred ideals and values open to attack.

Anyhow, it must be analyzed whether Islamic values are time-bound and temporary in nature? We must see whether they undergo change and transformation in time or not? Similarly, we must also discern whether the actions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) were relevant only within a certain time period, thus being irrelevant and obsolete now, or were some of their deeds indeed immutable and, therefore, imitable even today.

As for the narrow range of examples presented by these cynics, even we know that they represent affairs which we are not obliged to follow or emulate. No *Mujtahid* has ever studied the narrated traditions of the Immaculate Imams (as) and issued a verdict deeming it necessary for Muslims to live in mud houses today. The objective truth is that Islamic teachings and doctrine help us distinguish between actions that are obligatory in terms of emulation, and those that are not. It is not permissible for us to decide, arbitrarily, which instances to deem correct and valid, and which to reject as irrelevant.

Some individuals think that the *Fuqahā* invent edicts based upon their own whims and fancies. By seeing that certain laws change due to changes within their respective subjects, or by observing that other rules are not currently being applied within society, these people start believing that the scholars act arbitrarily, inventing laws as they go along. The truth is that if the *Fuqahā* see that society is rejecting certain laws, failing to honor them, then the *Fuqahā* have no choice but to stop applying and enforcing the rules in question.

One of my acquaintances, who had lived abroad for many years, returned to Iran after the Islamic Revolution. He used to talk about certain affairs, in the most serious of ways, and would ask, "Haven't they become permissible yet?" It was his perception that since the Revolution had been victorious, slowly but surely all prohibitions would be lifted and all cases of *Ḥarām* would now be declared *Ḥalāl*. This perception stems from Western culture and the history of the Christian Church. Islamic *Marāji'* differ greatly, in terms of the scope of their responsibilities and authority, from the Cardinals and Popes of the Catholic Church. Our view of the *Fuqahā* and *Marāji'* is that they are experts in Islamic jurisprudence and most skilled in the science of deriving Islamic laws from original sources such as the Holy Qurān and authentic narrated traditions. They do not, by any means whatsoever, have the right to frame new laws based upon their own personal views. However, the leaders of the Catholic Church were allowed to create new laws and repeal old ones. They could openly change the laws related to any subject, turning the prohibited to the permissible and vice-versa.

Influenced by this thinking, these people believe that when we call for Muslims to emulate the *Marāji'* we are calling them towards obeying a clergy that creates and revoke laws based on its own whims and interests. Within Islam any attempt to alter Almighty God's laws constitutes the greatest of sins, equal to a heretical polytheist who denies Almighty God's oneness and existential unity. The Holy Qurān and the narrated traditions speak harshly of such a vile act. In the Holy Qurān, God even warns His own Beloved Messenger (s) against ever inventing a law independent of the one revealed to him by Allah. Despite

its being impossible for the Holy Prophet (s) to commit any sin, let alone the one in question, God Almighty seeks to emphasize the severity of this transgression by declaring that even if His own messenger were to act in such a manner, He would surely punish him in the strictest of ways.

﴿وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ ٱلْأَقَاوِيلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِٱلْيَمِينِ ﴿٤٥﴾
ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ ٱلْوَتِينَ ﴾

"Had he faked any sayings in Our name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta,"[1]

Based upon a mistaken perspective which believes that the *Marāji'* have the authority to change Islamic laws, they spread doubts about the validity and practicality of Almighty God's commandments and hope to engineer public opinion in support of changes and alterations within Islamic doctrines and edicts. This, they deem, will force the clergy into complying with demands for reformation, as it will see itself pitted against a majority of the country's population. Consequently, a large body of Islamic laws which run counter to their wishes and whims will stand repealed. They declare that many of the laws within Islamic jurisprudence are no longer acceptable. In their view, it is no longer correct to cut off a thief's hand or whip the perpetrator of grievous sins.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, when the movement for university and curricular reform began,

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Ḥāqqah: 44-46.

Imam Khumaynī (ra) ordered the creation of the Office for University and Hawza Cooperation so as to manage the said reformation process and, thus, come up with a truly Islamic University system. In compliance with the Imam's (ra) directive, the body in question was set up and leading professors from the Hawza and University academia were invited to contribute towards the formation of new curricula, text books and Islamic course materials. I was also a part of this effort. In one of our meetings, we decided to approach a teacher within the Law faculty of the University of Tehran. Apart from being a law professor, this person was a clergyman as well, with close relations to one of the *Marāji'*. Our plan was to invite him to join us in producing new resource material dealing with Law. We believed that he would happily welcome the efforts being made, and would encourage us in producing Law books that were compatible with Islamic teachings. When he came to see us, we first briefed him about the project and its objectives. I explained that after the establishment of the Islamic system it was now necessary to reform our university systems so that they come in line with the wider array of Islam's goals and ideals. I pointed out the close proximity that existed between the study of Law and the field of Islamic jurisprudence, and that the time was now ripe for producing books about Islamic Law, in the modern sense of the term.

After my short introductory remarks, our guest began speaking. At first he expressed his gratitude, also complaining about being ignored after the Revolution and not being contacted earlier. He also expressed his satisfaction with reference to these renewed efforts aimed at bridging the gap between universities and the Hawza.

Following these courteous words, he said something that left us shocked. He remarked, "I have heard that there still exist certain Ākhunds[1] in Qum who (stupidly) believe (even in this day and age) that criminals should be whipped like donkeys and that adulterers flogged for fornication!" We were left totally dumbfounded wondering who we had invited to help us in this project. Anyhow, we politely excused ourselves and wrapped up the meeting, saying that there existed immoderation on all sides and that we must try to navigate these extremist ideas in order to discover the correct and most rational solution to our problems. (We narrate this story so as to present the mindset that prevails amongst these circles).

The Necessity of Combating Open Instances of Heresy and Apostasy

In the early days of the Islamic Revolution, a son-in-law of one of the *Marāji'*, who was also a Hawza student, ridiculed certain minor Islamic laws. One is not amazed when he sees individuals, lacking any knowledge of Islam's teachings and not having studied in the Hawza, do the same. One such person, who also occupied a sensitive administrative position, once declared, "We reject any religion that fails to guarantee absolute freedom." By "absolute freedom" they mean that "if one day the people decide to overthrow the Islamic system and government, their wishes must be respected and immediately implemented without so much as a whimper of resentment." This means that these people will only accept

1. A term used to signify a clergyman but is normally used in a derogatory sense.

Islam if the religion grants them the right to supersede itself, allowing them the power to abrogate it whenever they deem fit. On the other hand, if Islam fails to grant them this right, they too will reject its authority since it negates the absolute nature of their liberty. When certain individuals make a mockery of Islamic law, and some clergymen cast doubt upon the immutability of Islamic punishments and regulations (e.g. the penalty for theft etc.), they effectively reject the explicit precepts of Islam as defined by the Holy Qurān. This, in turn, constitutes heresy by which a person casts himself out of the perimeter of Islam. There is a very thin line between faith and disbelief, and people can cross this line quite easily. It has been narrated that in the End-times such crossovers would become common-place. Imam Ṣādiq (as) is quoted to have described the character of people during the End-times by saying, "(In the Last Age,) human beings will be believers in the morning, only to turn into disbelievers by nightfall."[1]

When we were children, we would hear teachers from the pulpits saying, "During the Last Age, preserving one's religion would be like holding a piece of red hot metal in one's hand." This sentence, which is corroborated by what we find within the narrated traditions, was hard for us to believe and would leave us baffled. How can religion, belief in Almighty God and the Hereafter, praying and fasting be synonymous to holding a smoldering piece of metal in one's palm? We were unable to understand what this meant for many years. However, today things have revealed themselves and these words have turned into

1. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, volume 69, chapter 34, tradition 17, pg. 225.

practical examples. We see with our own eyes that newspapers, magazines, and books are circulated in the millions and speeches are made all over the country questioning and mocking the divinely revealed teachings and laws of Islam. All this happens without provoking the slightest reaction from society. Will things seize to continue after a person like Āghā Jarī ridicules the Immaculate Imams (as) as well as Islamic laws? By God Almighty, if his sentence is not carried out, we will surely bear witness to dozens of other such individuals in the near future. Others will line up to insult our sanctities and ideals as they shamelessly implement all malicious designs conceived by foreign imperialist powers against the very fabric of our society.

A while back, a plan was executed within the African state of Nigeria by the veteran colonial power, Britain. Nigeria is a country with more than a 100 million citizens, mostly Muslim, but their government is still in Christian hands. Recently, a beauty contest was arranged there with people invited from all parts of the globe. Before the actual event, they tried to lay the necessary cultural groundwork for implementing their plans. The idea was to gauge the Muslim population's sensitivity to any affronts against their religious sanctities. A Christian writer was tasked with penning an article insulting the Holy Prophet (s) and this article was read out in public during the said occasion. The reaction of the honorable Muslims of Nigeria was instantaneous. They poured out into the streets of Nigeria in open rebellion and demonstrated in the millions, with hundreds falling as martyrs.

Articles of the same sort are being printed here. The only difference is that in Nigeria they do not have a Ministry of

Culture and Islamic Guidance to help them put into place policies promoting negligence, and teach people how to be shameless. The people are still loyal to their religious convictions, because dangerous neo-colonial ideas like religious pluralism have not yet taken root. In contrast, in our own Islamic and revolutionary country, which forms the global epicenter of Islamic cultural authority and whose revolutionary leader was the most sensitive of all Muslims when it came to defending the sanctity of Islam, we have descended to such lows that everyday new and more venomous insults are spewed from newspapers, books and lecture halls against the teachings of Islam. Faced with these waves of impertinence, some of our government officials show almost no reaction, merely issue lackluster statements, as a matter of mere formality, mildly condemning the expression of such ideas. If the state of affairs continues to remain as such, no one knows where we may end up.

There is no doubt that every person bears the responsibility of defending Islam against these satanic attacks that are even more hazardous than an actual military invasion. The foremost responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the clergy, since it has been trained in the teachings of Islam and has volunteered to defend Islam and the Shia school of thought against all transgressions. If the clergy remains silent today, it will find its silence inexcusable in times to come. However, the people and the government must also play their part because the responsibility in question is shared by us all. Nevertheless, the special position of the clergy expects it to take center-stage when dealing with matters related to religious and cultural issues. Thus, we must promptly address the

criticism being spread, answering it in a most logical and satisfying manner, and thereby immunizing society against the immense harm of such fallacious skepticism.

LECTURE SIX
EMULATION VIS-À-VIS THE INTELLECT AND REVELATION

The Intellect's Role within *Taqlīd* and Choosing a Correct Role-Model

One criticism against *Taqlīd*, which has gained a great deal of ground lately, states that all human beings are equipped with an intellect and are, therefore, fully qualified to determine their own best interests independently, without having to emulate others. As such, following others or emulating their behavior runs completely opposite to what the intellect dictates as correct and is, thus, a "monkey-like" act of utter foolishness.

The proponents of this idea present the audience with certain cases of incorrect *Taqlīd* and, by demonstrating the invalidity of these cases, attempt to universally generalize this invalidity, attributing it to all forms of *Taqlīd*, declaring it within the area of Islamic law as equally incorrect. However, the chain does not stop there. Once the entire idea of *Taqlīd* has been called into question, they raise the stakes even further, proclaiming it irrational to follow Almighty God's prophets and apostles as well. In their deduction, people should only follow their own minds. One of the concepts being popularized within the books published and speeches delivered by these individuals is the idea of critically analyzing Qurānic text. These so-called liberal religious writers and speakers

believe that some sections of the Holy Qurān are, in fact, flawed in nature. From their standpoint, we must determine the accuracy of Qurānic text by comparing it to scientific proof. If a certain portion of its text turns out to be compatible with science, we should accept it whole-heartedly, otherwise we should put it aside.

While acknowledging that a host of domestic and foreign vested interests lie behind the propagation of these ideas, we, nevertheless, bear a responsibility toward answering the criticisms being presented within society today. Unfortunately, such criticism is rarely addressed within Hawza circles.

As we repeated several times in our discourses, the key tool used by these critics is a form of paralogistic fallacy wherein they present their audience with a handful of obviously mistaken instances of *Taqlīd*, only to generalize and universalize this mistaken nature to all forms of the said practice. In conclusion, they declare that people should shun *Taqlīd* completely and only follow their own minds. We answered this criticism by saying that indeed certain types of *Taqlīd* are utterly unjustifiable and even the Holy Qurān reprimands those who engage in them. However, other types of *Taqlīd* are entirely logical and, in some circumstances, may even be obligatory in nature. The criteria to determine whether or not following and emulating a certain person or group is correct stems from whether there exists competent intellectual proof sanctioning such emulation. Thus, in places where such proof is not at hand, or where proof points to the contrary, *Taqlīd* would automatically be deemed unacceptable. We acknowledge only those forms of *Taqlīd* where the intellect rules in its favor, and reject all forms of *Taqlīd*

that may be motivated by other reasons e.g. peer pressure, a desire for popularity, a thirst for elevating one's social status, a hunger for more political power and a fulfillment of one's lustful worldly appetites. In all cases wherein *Taqlīd* fails to win proper sanction from the intellect, we too shun it as reprehensible. The Holy Qurān speaks of these erroneous instances of emulation by saying:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ٱتَّبِعُواْ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ قَالُواْ بَلۡ نَتَّبِعُ مَآ أَلۡفَيۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ ءَابَآءَنَآۚ أَوَلَوۡ كَانَ ءَابَآؤُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡقِلُونَ شَيۡـٔٗا وَلَا يَهۡتَدُونَ﴾

"When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'No, We will follow what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither exercised their reason, nor were guided?"[1]

*I*n another place, God Almighty says:

﴿قَٰلَ أَوَلَوۡ جِئۡتُكُم بِأَهۡدَىٰ مِمَّا وَجَدتُّمۡ عَلَيۡهِ ءَابَآءَكُمۡۖ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا بِمَآ أُرۡسِلۡتُم بِهِۦ كَٰفِرُونَ﴾

"He will say, 'What! Even if I bring you a better guidance than what you found your fathers following?' They would say, 'We indeed disbelieve in what you are sent with.'"[2]

Both the above verses rebuke people who stubbornly follow the practices of their misguided ancestors without having any rational proof for the said deeds. They

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Baqarah: 170.
2. The Holy Qurān, Al-Zukhruf: 24.

adamantly continue emulating their forefathers knowing that their actions were, and remain, intellectually indefensible. The Holy Qurān invites these people towards paying heed to their own rational minds, while asking them to steer clear of all baseless acts. Additionally, the Holy Qurān reprimands these people for continuing to follow the ways of their forefathers even when more effective ways were being offered to them. It criticizes them for sticking to their misleading traditions, while rejecting new and logical forms of guidance. The Holy Qurān notes that the ancestors of these people had either no justification for their actions, or that their justifications were incorrect. In any case, persisting in emulating their example confounds the senses and insults the intellect.

The Holy Qurān says that if a practice or idea were placed before you, bearing qualified proof, with your intellect understanding it to be correct, then you should readily acknowledge and accept it without resentment. Similarly, if a practice or idea was passed down to you via previous generations, but it stood against reason and lacked any form of qualified proof, then, it is your duty to reject it without hesitation. If you do so, then you would have followed the instructions of your intellect. In contrast, if you were presented with a logical and rational practice or idea, and you discard it even after realizing that the intellect acknowledges and accepts it, then you have indeed trampled your own intellect. Consequently, you will find yourself inadvertently facing the ill effects of such behavior, not to mention Hell-fire.

In short, it is the intellect that deems *Taqlīd* to be necessary in certain cases. In these said instances, we follow the verdict of the intellect when we engage in

Taqlīd ourselves, or invite others to do the same. Therefore, it is wrong to think that the invitation towards *Taqlīd* is based on our own whims, and that we arbitrarily declare it to be correct in some circumstances of our own choosing, while proclaiming it to be incorrect in others.

The Intellect's Limited Reach

People should primarily follow the directions and dictates of their intellects. However, by this we mean that people should act in accordance with irrefutable intellectual proof; proof that comes into being as a result of argumentation that is founded upon *Badīhīyāt* or self-evident facts. If a proof be derived on such self-evident facts, it should be acceptable to all logical individuals.

Today, however, words have lost their original connotations, thereby, causing confusion. The words "intellect" and "intellectual" are two such cases. Often these words are used to signify disputable ideas, imaginary conceptions and even egoistic base desires. As such, even these concepts come to be labeled as "intellectual" ideas. Consequently, when such notions are also deemed "intellectual" in nature, the universality of the intellectual conclusions are compromised, and relativism ensues. Suddenly, it becomes completely natural for different people to draw completely different, even conflicting, "intellectual" conclusions. In its correct sense, if a proof is intellectual in nature, then it must undeniably beyond disagreement. In truth, disagreement regarding a certain proposition stems from it not having attained complete intellectual approval. Apart from this, healthy intellects are not marred with differences with reference to their

purely intellectual conclusions; unless, of course, they are confounded with fallacies which inhibit their abilities.

Nevertheless, putting aside the incorrect usage of the word, there still exist certain matters wherein the intellect finds itself incapable of independently forming a conclusive opinion. These matters may relate to the world's material existence, as experienced through sense perception, or to issues pertaining to spirituality, or socio-legal matters, or even ethical and moral values. For instance, our intellect cannot tell us what is going on inside a certain house in another place. This knowledge is only attainable through sense perception. Similarly, the intellect cannot independently deduce the years of Alexander of Macedonia's reign, nor can it tell whether or not the Qurān speaks of him when it refers to a personality named *Dhulqarnayn*. Likewise, it has no way of telling whether or not this Qurānic figure is the same as the king called *Kūrush* with Persian history. The intellect can form no independent opinion in these matters. It must look towards other sources of knowledge in order to answer these questions. For historical queries, it must enlist the services of historical records to draw any conclusions. The same is true for all things that fall within the jurisdiction of empirical science. These must be decided through an entirely different methodology of research called experimentation. For instance, the intellect, no matter how well-trained it may be, cannot independently figure out the effect and side-effect of a certain medicine. These effects, positive or negative as they may be, can only be determined through controlled experimentation. Furthermore, divine religions have claimed that God Almighty has created certain entities called angels. Four of

them, the archangels, are named Jibrāyīl, Mīkāyīl, Isrāfīl and 'Izrāyīl. However, the intellect can neither prove nor disprove their existence. We find the intellect facing a similar handicap when interrogated about the number of Almighty God's prophets throughout human history, or a truck load of other comparable questions. In short, the intellect has no capability when it comes to a long list of such questions. As such, it has no authority to interfere within queries that exist in these numerous fields. It cannot, independently, decide on matters related to laws as well as social and moral regulations. The intellect, according to the correct sense of the word, cannot, by itself, decide how to punish a thief.

Some beliefs are also beyond the scope of the intellect. One such issue is what forms the principle point of contention between the Shia and Sunni schools of Islamic thought. This matter is, of course, the dispute regarding temporal authority after the Holy Prophet's (s) demise. The Shia believe that 'Alī (as) is the rightful heir to the Holy Prophet (s), while the Sunni disagree with this idea. Here, we cannot prove through the intellect alone whether or not a person named 'Alī (as) even existed in history, let alone that he was also the Prophet (s) rightful inheritor. This matter is historical in nature and can only be resolved through a study of historical texts and records. Only through analyzing history, the Holy Qurān, its exegeses and the narrated traditions can we determine that an individual named 'Alī (as) did, in fact, exist and that he was appointed by the Holy Prophet (s) as his successor through divine decree. By sifting meticulously through these chronicles, we can come to know who 'Alī (as) was, what his character traits were, and how he stood superior

to others in his faith, piety, knowledge, wisdom and other features. It is only after a detailed examination of these narrated sources, and after having recognized the person in question alongside his unparalleled attributes, that the intellect can successfully judge him to be the only suitable candidate for leadership after the Sacred Prophet (s).

The Necessity of Learning the Articles of Belief from Their Relevant Sources

After understanding that there exist numerous questions which the intellect cannot independently answer, we also realize that many of these questions do not bear much practical significance in our lives. If left unanswered, they would not cause us any great amount of distress. For instance, the intellect has no means of telling whether or not there exist life on the planet Mars. Nevertheless, knowing the answer to that query would not help us in fixing any of our problems, nor do we feel any other profound need compelling us to search for this information. Therefore, we can even safely articulate incorrect opinions with reference to such mysteries without incurring any harmful consequences. On the other hand, not knowing certain issues may result in adverse effects, but these effects are so minute in nature that one does not consider them serious threats.

Nonetheless, there exist a number of matters that the intellect cannot independently fathom but which play a pivotal role in our lives. They are crucial in determining our overall success or failure, and cannot, therefore, be ignored or taken lightly. For instance, divine prophets have informed us of the Hereafter and have told us about Judgment Day. The least we know with complete certainty

with reference to this claim is that there indeed exists a possibility of it being true. On the other hand, the Holy Qurān describes the dire consequences of denying the truth of this report in the harshest of terms:

﴿ بَلۡ كَذَّبُواْ بِٱلسَّاعَةِۖ وَأَعۡتَدۡنَا لِمَن كَذَّبَ بِٱلسَّاعَةِ سَعِيرًا ﴾

"Indeed, they deny the Hour, and We have prepared a Blaze for those who deny the Hour."[1]

Now, having understood the critical influence that any belief in this final day can have on our lives, alongside the possibility of grave consequences if we were to reject its existence, we can no longer ignore it. Furthermore, because the Day of Judgment, if it really does exist, places an overwhelming shadow upon all our affairs and claims to determine the state of our eternal existence within the Hereafter, we must not take the risk of denying it even if we are unable to prove it as true. In fact, we must act cautiously to avoid such grave danger, and while doing so, try to establish the truth about the Hereafter through intellectual proof and other forms of qualified evidence.

When God Almighty tells us that the Day of Judgment exists, these words may only create a possibility within our minds. This possibility may be very small, but the risk attached to it being true is, in fact, limitless and infinite (since we are talking about eternal salvation or damnation, whatever the case may be). As such, when we multiply the two probabilities we still get a result that is infinite in value (since any number, no matter how small, would still give you infinity if it were multiplied by infinity). In short,

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Furqān: 11.

the monumental nature of the risk involved totally outweighs the small possibility of the event not actually taking place. Thus, the mere possibility of there being a Hereafter and a Judgment Day is, in fact, much more significant in value than many of the objective facts, dealing with limited phenomena, that we know to be true with utter certainty.

Eternal reward based on believing that the Hereafter definitely exists, and acting in a manner that mirrors the said conviction, as against eternal damnation for denying the said day and acting in a manner that represents this alternate opinion: these are the two options that we face. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we be able to find an answer to our question about the Hereafter and its existence. If the intellect fails to furnish us with an adequate reply, then we must search for other credible sources of knowledge that may illuminate us with reference to this extremely important query. If at the end of our research, we find ourselves convinced that the Hereafter does indeed exist, then this belief will effectively alter the entire course of our lives. We will be careful about all our actions and utterances, holding ourselves accountable for our deeds and words, and viewing ourselves responsible for the state of affairs that surround us. Having embraced this belief, we would constantly be mindful of the consequences of our action, not allowing ourselves to lie or even articulate an incorrect idea knowingly. It would now be our solemn belief that each and every single one of our deeds is recorded, and that such acts can incur God's displeasure, and even divine punishment.

﴿مَّا يَلۡفِظُ مِن قَوۡلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيۡهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ﴾

"…he says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him…"[1]

This is the sense of profound responsibility that a correct belief in the Hereafter creates and nourishes. In order to escape such responsibility, and to allow themselves freedom to do all that is wrong and indulge in all the vices without any accountability, a certain group of individuals stubbornly reject the existence of any such final hour or universal judgment. They do so, even though they have no proof to corroborate their denial. God Almighty talks of this behavior in the Holy Qurān:

﴿أَيَحۡسَبُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ أَلَّن نَّجۡمَعَ عِظَامَهُۥ ۝٣ بَلَىٰ قَٰدِرِينَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن نُّسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُۥ ۝٤ بَلۡ يُرِيدُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ لِيَفۡجُرَ أَمَامَهُۥ ۝٥ يَسۡـَٔلُ أَيَّانَ يَوۡمُ ٱلۡقِيَٰمَةِ﴾

"Does man suppose that We will not put together his bones [at resurrection]? Yes indeed, We are able to [re]shape [even] his fingertips! Indeed (man has no doubt about the Day of Judgment, but) man desires to go on living viciously. (As such) he asks, 'When will be this "day of resurrection"?'"[2]

In another place, God Almighty says:

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1. The Holy Qurān, Qāf: 18.
2. The Holy Qurān, Al-Qiyāmah: 3-6.

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ ٱللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَٱلسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا قُلْتُم مَّا نَدْرِى مَا ٱلسَّاعَةُ إِن نَّظُنُّ إِلَّا ظَنًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُسْتَيْقِنِينَ ﴾

"When it was said, ''Allah's promise is indeed true, and there is no doubt about the Hour,'' you said, 'We do not know what the Hour is. We know nothing beyond conjectures, and we do not possess any certainty.' "[1]

From the view point of the Holy Qurān, *people who deny the existence and truth of the Hereafter, do so in order to escape the weight of responsibility.* They reject the Hereafter's existence so that they may engage in all manners of vicious acts, free from the psychological pressure of being held accountable. Apart from this, they have no reason to substantiate their denial of this final hour. They know full-well that whatever they present as evidence constitutes nothing but lame excuses. When God Almighty created mankind from nothing and brought them into existence, why would He not be able to do so again, resurrecting them after everything perishes?

The Intellect's Submission to Revelation

It is correct that the intellect cannot independently confirm the truth about a number of religious teachings, one of them being the exact details of what will transpire during the Hereafter. However, the intellect can independently confirm the existence of God Almighty and understand His necessary attributes. Thus, when a person has established the truth of Almighty God's existence, and has

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Jāthiyah: 32.

comprehended what His attributes are and what such attributes dictate about the nature of His creation, he has no choice but to accept Almighty God's words in their totality. As such, when God Almighty speaks of the Hereafter, this person is easily able to accept all the information delivered to him by this divine source. He does not find himself doubting Almighty God's words because his intellect tells him that they are definitely correct (based on what it has independently deduced of Almighty God's infinite perfection and truthfulness). When God Almighty declares that He has created us, not just for this temporal world, but for the eternal abode of the Hereafter, the mind tells us that we cannot question the veracity of this information because, firstly, it is Almighty God's word and, secondly, it has been conveyed to us by divine revelation via a person who is Almighty God's chosen messenger. The truthfulness of this Messenger (s) has already been established through indisputable proof. Additionally, God Almighty has also granted him the ability to do miracles so that the intellect would not be able to argue with his claim to prophethood. Given this irrefutable body of proof, the honesty of the messenger is longer in doubt, and all people can easily have faith in each and every one of his words. Consequently, when such a messenger brings to us a message, the intellect accepts this message since it has received it via a dependable channel. It has received this message from an individual who was chosen by God Almighty from amongst millions of human beings in order to act as a bridge between Him and humanity. God's choice in this matter was surely based upon the inherent and unparalleled capabilities of the person in question. When a prophet with such a resume comes forward, bringing us

divine revelation, there remains no doubt in our minds that the message being transferred is, indeed, the spoken word of the Almighty. As such, it is our intellectual responsibility to act in accordance with the revealed information.

It is illogical to ask why God Almighty does not speak to each and every one of us directly. The ability to directly receive Almighty God's word and His revelation is limited to people who have the existential capability for making such a connection with the divine. God Almighty, Himself, knows and recognizes where, and in whom, this essential competence exists.

﴿... ٱللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ ﴾

"…Allah knows best where to place His apostleship!"[1]

Thus, once God Almighty commands us to perform a certain action, and this command comes to us via a prophet who is unequivocally reliable and utterly immune to error, the intellect immediately directs us to submit wholeheartedly to this divine commandment.

Regardless of what cast, ethnicity or nationality a divine prophet may hail from, it is our solemn duty to accept his words and obey his orders. He is Almighty God's Ḥujjah (undeniable proof and authority) over us, and forms a bridge between Him and humanity, enjoying divinely granted infallibility. Given these credentials, the intellect instructs us to submit to him and follow his every direction. However, in history there existed certain people who accepted the Holy Prophet (s) simply because he was

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-An'ām: 124

an Arab. These people founded their faith and obedience to Almighty God's Apostle (s) upon nationalistic and ethnic prejudice. If God Almighty had bestowed prophethood and revelation upon a person from some other nation, these individuals would have reacted by shunning him and turning away from his message.

﴿وَلَوۡ نَزَّلۡنَٰهُ عَلَىٰ بَعۡضِ ٱلۡأَعۡجَمِينَ ١٩٨ فَقَرَأَهُۥ عَلَيۡهِم مَّا كَانُواْ بِهِۦ مُؤۡمِنِينَ﴾

"Had We sent it down upon some non-Arab, and had he recited it to them, they would not have believed in it."[1]

The Criterion for Following the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

When we speak of following and obeying the Holy Prophet (s), we do not do so simply because he was an honest and wise man, or because he was a thinker and philosopher who had great compassion for other people and who yearned for social reform and societal wellbeing. None of these grand attributes, lofty and commendable as they may be, qualify an individual to be considered Almighty God's *Ḥujjah* (undeniable proof and authority). In turn, we have no obligation to obey someone who does not bear this divinely granted office and rank, no matter how good a person he may be. The obedience of the Holy Prophet (s) is compulsory upon us because he is connected to God Almighty and receives His divine revelation. Once we have confirmed all of this through sufficient and

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Shu'arā: 198, 199.

competent proof, like intellectual evidence and miraculous deeds, we know for a fact that the Sacred Messenger (s) is indeed Almighty God's chosen apostle and that his words are, in fact, Almighty God's words. As such, the intellect instructs us to submit before his every command. In any instance where the intellect cannot independently draw a conclusive decision, we are duty bound to follow an external source which is linked to divine knowledge, given that we have confirmed the presence of this link with complete certitude. This link between him and the celestial realm of God Almighty is the Holy Prophet's (s) defining quality and it is this ability which makes him stand out from amongst all other human beings, rendering his obedience obligatory upon us all.

﴿ قُلۡ إِنَّمَآ أَنَا۠ بَشَرٞ مِّثۡلُكُمۡ يُوحَىٰٓ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَآ إِلَٰهُكُمۡ إِلَٰهٞ وَٰحِدٞ ﴾

"Say, 'I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God."[1]

As we said earlier, certain groups and individuals have shed doubt over the validity of following and emulating other people. The same group believes it to be equally applicable to the issue of following Almighty God's prophets and apostles. We rejected such ideas by pointing out that the obligation to obey Almighty God's prophets is an obligation that the intellect confirms. Due to their connection with the divine, the revelation they receive and their immaculate nature, the intellect understands them to be completely reliable and sees their message as absolutely true. Consequently, it commands us to follow

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Kahf: 110.

their instructions and emulate their deeds, making them our role-models in all affairs of life.

One section of the Holy Prophet's (s) words constitutes the divine revelations sent down to him by God Almighty. These words form the text of the Holy Qurān. As such, these words are in actuality Almighty God's own words and obeying them is a natural outcome of accepting this fact. The other section of the Sacred Messenger's (s) speech, alongside his practical example and behavior, constitutes what is called the *Sunnah* (or the entire body of narrated traditions). We find ourselves obliged to obey his instructions in these instances as well, even though they do not form Almighty God's own words. This is because the Prophet's (s) own words and actions are always a reflection of God's commands. This is further confirmed by the infallibility that the Apostle (s) enjoys, thereby rendering all his acts and words absolutely pure of error. Additionally, God Almighty Himself, within the Holy Qurān, commands us to follow the Blessed Prophet (s) in the entirety of his words, deeds and behavior.

﴿وَمَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَىٰكُمۡ عَنۡهُ فَٱنتَهُواْۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلۡعِقَابِ﴾

"Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and refrain from whatever he forbids you, and be wary of Allah. Indeed Allah is severe in retribution."[1]

We, the Shia, also believe that the words and deeds of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) bear the same authority over us as the words and deeds of the Holy Messenger (s). As such, obeying them, and emulating their example, is obligatory upon us just as it is obligatory for us to obey the Holy Prophet's (s) commands and actions. However, the intellect does not independently come to this conclusion. It cannot accept or reject this special status for the Ahl al-Bayt (as) based only upon its own comprehension. Nevertheless, when its abilities are coupled with the explicit directions of the Holy Qurān and the Sacred Messenger (s), commanding us to obey the Ahl al-Bayt (as) just as we obey God Almighty and His Blessed Prophet (s), the intellect utilizes this undeniable information to come up with a conclusive judgment. It, therefore, deems it necessary for us to follow their instructions and emulate their examples. The following is one from amongst numerous Qurānic verses that point towards our duty in this regards:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِي ٱلۡأَمۡرِ مِنكُمۡۖ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Ḥashr: 7.

"O' you who have faith, Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you."[1]

Obviously, and without a shadow of doubt, this Qurānic verse does not signify that we must obey all rulers who may somehow come to power over us. It is certainly clear that we have no duty to follow every tyrant and usurper that history holds in store. The connotation of the verse in question has nothing to do with such deviant ideas and even during the Holy Prophet's (s) own era none of his companions ever drew such conclusions from the said verse.

In a prophetic tradition narrated upon the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abdullah Anṣārī we are told that after the revelation of this Qurānic verse, the companions of the Holy Messenger (s) asked him about the phrase *Ūlī al-Amr* (those vested with authority). The Prophet (s) replied that the phrase in question signifies his successors, the twelve Immaculate Imams who shall have authority over the Muslims after his demise. He then told them the names of his Immaculate Heirs, the first amongst them being 'Alī ibn Abīṭālib (as) while the last was pointed out as *Al-Ḥujjah* (as).[2]

During the time of Imam Ṣādiq (as), the self-appointed caliph of the Muslim state had totally forgotten the idea of good governance and was spreading tyranny and oppression instead. The Shia, the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), were particularly targeted and abused. The agents of the royal court, in a bid to legitimize the caliph's brutality and shameful vice, tried to employ and invoke

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 59.
2. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, volume 3, chapter 41, tradition 67, pg. 25.

this Qurānic verse in his favor. They even forged a number of prophetic traditions to back up their claims. In doing so, they proclaimed that the word *Ūlī al-Amr* (those vested with authority) stands to signify all rulers and governments. Therefore, in their view, it was religiously obligatory upon all people to obey their rulers, no matter how cruel or unjust their acts may be. In contrast to this vile propaganda, the Immaculate Imams (as) would strive to teach the people the true exegesis of this Qurānic verse, informing them of the authentic narrated traditions which explained its meanings.

In a tradition narrated upon the authority of Abū Baṣīr, it is recorded that Imam Bāqir (as) said, "The verse: ***Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you***, was revealed in favor of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (as)." Abū Baṣīr asked the Imam (as), "People often question us as to why God did not explicitly mention the names of 'Alī (as) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) within the Holy Qurān". The Imam (as) replied, "Tell them that God Almighty revealed the *Ṣalāh* (the daily ritual prayers) for the Holy Prophet (s) but made no mention of whether they constituted three or four *rakāh*, until the Prophet (s) himself interpreted the said commandment. (Similarly) God Almighty revealed the *Ḥajj* unto His Messenger (s) but made no mention of the seven circumambulations (around the Ka'bah) until the Prophet (s) himself interpreted the said verse. (Likewise) the Qurānic verse: ***Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you***, was revealed in favor of 'Alī (as), Ḥasan (as) and Ḥusayn (as), and the Prophet (s) (announced this when he) said about 'Alī (as):

Whosoever holds me as his *Mawlā* (or Master) then (he must also deem) 'Ali (as) as his *Mawlā* (or Master)."[1]

Therefore, when God mentions the *Ūlī al-Amr* (those vested with authority) in his Holy Book, our minds can easily determine that Almighty God's vested authority does not include tyrannical despots. On the other hand, our intellect cannot independently confirm the names and identities of the individuals which the said verse intends to signify. In order to find out this information we must refer to the Prophet's (s) narrated traditions, since apart from being the vessel through which God Almighty reveals His sacred word, the Holy Messenger (s) is also the interpreter and exegete of Qurānic text. The verdicts of the Blessed Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (s) with reference to Qurānic interpretation hold absolute authority and probative value, and must therefore be obeyed. In fact, no other human being enjoys such a status vis-à-vis the Holy Qurān. Yes, Qurānic scholars can use various tools, like the Qurān's own text, historical evidence and narrate traditions, to interpret and explain the Holy Book, but this explanation is only an opinion amongst many, holding no probative authority. Such authority only resides within the interpretations delivered to us by the Holy Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as), especially in places where there exists an instance of the "lawgiver's sanction" and we are not free to draw any meanings other than that intended by Almighty God Himself. Therefore, once the Sacred Messenger (s) explicitly points out who the *Ūlī al-Amr* (those vested with authority) are, all other views regarding the matter are automatically annulled. In turn, the words

1. *Tafsīr Al-'Ayāshī*, volume 1 (Beirut, Muassasat al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt), pg. 276.

and deeds of the Immaculates (as) come to be endowed with absolute probative standing because, according to the Prophet's (s) authentic tradition, these personalities have been singled out as the ones referred to by God Almighty in the above Qurānic statement. So the Prophet's (s) declaration grants this unique authority and status to the Immaculates (as), whereas God's divine decree had bestowed the same authority upon the Holy Prophet (s) previously. God's own inherent authority over all matters was acknowledged by the intellect without external help. Thus, we see that the chain of command leads back, without fail, to the intellect's independent findings, with each link within this chain effectively forged from an irrefutable piece of evidence. In short, this demonstrates that obedience to the Immaculates (as) is also confirmed by the intellect with complete certitude.

In opposition to this view, certain people believe that the only valid criterion for judging a particular opinion as correct is that it be supported by the majority of a given population. When the majority has expressed itself, all others must submit to its authority. They hold this principle to be absolute, even if the majority's verdict runs counter to logic, reason and Almighty God's own word. They assert this to be true, even though the fact remains that the only instance wherein the opinions of a people bear any credibility, majority or not, is when these opinions are in line with rational reasoning and Almighty God's immutable commandments. If we were to accept their assertion about majority rule, how would we explain what the Holy Prophet (s) did in his own era? The majority, back then, were definitely polytheists and disbelievers. Based upon the said proposition, the Blessed

Messenger's (s) actions in opposition to the social and religious status quo of his time were totally illegitimate. What he should have done was, submit to the creed of his fellow Arabs and accept their polytheistic ways. Similarly, the Prophet Ibrāhīm's (as) opposition to his nation's superstitious beliefs was also incorrect. He was completely out of place when he took an axe and shattered their man-made idols, thereby trampling upon the majority's essential prerogative. Once the overwhelming majority of the Arabs in Hijāz were idol worshippers, why did the Prophet Muhammad (s) allow himself to oppose their religious convictions, preaching monotheistic beliefs instead? Obviously, the Prophet of Islam (s) and Ibrāhīm (as) were both correct in their action. This series of rhetorical questions displays that the primary criterion is reason and reason alone. If the intellect fails to determine a matter independently, then we must turn to secondary, immutable, and irrefutable sources that enjoy the intellect's complete approval. In such cases, the teachings of Almighty God's prophets, apostles and the Immaculate Imams (as) are decisively more reliable than any other views articulated elsewhere. These teachings are deemed by the intellect, through a chain of clear evidence, to be in line with objective reality, and must therefore be obeyed.

As such, following the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and emulating their example both constitute instances of *Taqlīd*. Similarly, we demonstrated that this kind of *Taqlīd* is entirely reasonable in nature and fully endorsed by the intellect, thus answering our critics who believed that people should not follow the prophets and apostles of God Almighty but their own intellects. This is true since the intellect determines such behavior to

be valid and admissible, even obligatory under certain circumstances. We also noted that in places where the intellect independently reaches conclusive results, we are duty-bound to follow its findings, while in other places where it falls short of this achievement, we must follow other immutable sources validated by the intellect itself i.e. the Prophet (s) and the Immaculates (as). We do this because the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculates (as) are not only infallible, but are also connected to an eternal reservoir of divine knowledge. This knowledge allows them to know the truth of all things, determining correct from the incorrect, and right from wrong. By obeying their directions, we are not engaged in an illogical and superstitious act of servitude, but are in fact behaving most rationally and in accordance to the diktats of the intellect.

﴿كَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا فِيكُمۡ رَسُولاً مِّنكُمۡ يَتۡلُواْ عَلَيۡكُمۡ ءَايَٰتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمۡ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ وَٱلۡحِكۡمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمۡ تَكُونُواْ تَعۡلَمُونَ﴾

"Even as We sent to you an apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know."[1]

1 The Holy Qurān, Al-Baqarah: 151.

The Criterion for Emulating a *Faqīh* is the Collective Behavior of Rational People

During the age of occultation, the issue of doing *Taqlīd* (emulation) of a *Faqīh* becomes relevant. It is here that certain people denounce this act as reprehensible and "monkey-like", inviting people to follow their own personal judgments instead. To debunk this denunciation, we must first clear some introductory matters. Firstly, emulating a *Faqīh* and obeying his verdicts is not an act that is directly validated by the intellect. What the intellect confirms is the obedience and emulation of an immutable source like the Immaculates (as), due to their infallibility. The *Faqīh*, while being an expert jurisprudent, is by no means infallible. This is demonstrated by the academic and jurisprudential disagreements that the *Fuqahā* have amongst them. Nevertheless, emulating the *Faqīh* is not without logic, even though the rationale involved is not a direct intellectual accreditation of the said act. The truth is that this form of *Taqlīd* bases itself upon *Sīrah al-'Uqalā* (or the collective behavior of rational people). Such collective behavior is always rooted in some sort of essential intellectual proof. In our case, this collective behavior is what we have mentioned several times as the act of "lay-men referring to qualified experts in matters which lie outside their own scope of knowledge and skill." When a person finds himself in need of a certain piece of information that lies beyond his own knowledge base and which the intellect cannot independently derive, he automatically seeks out someone who is an expert within the relevant field. By referring to this expert, he acquires what he originally wanted to attain. In doing so, he knows full-well that the expert in question is fallible and not

protected from error and sin, but he goes to him anyway, enlisting his assistance. However, when he compares the probability of error that exists in following his own uneducated opinion to the probability of error that exists in obeying the verdicts of a trained expert, he clearly deduces that the latter is enormously less risky. As such, he understands that he has no choice but to consult the expert in question.

When a person loses his way while traveling, and comes across an individual who seems to be well-informed about the correct routes within the area, does he not promptly consult this individual, preferring his opinion to his own? He sees that following his own opinion bears little chance of leading him anywhere, while following the guide's directions holds a greater chance of leading him back on track, so he follows the directions given to him.

When the sick visit their physicians in order to be treated for their various ailments, they do so because of this very *Sīrah* (or collective behavior of rational people). When they visit a qualified doctor, they realize completely that this doctor can make mistakes, but the probability of him making an error in his diagnosis and prescription is colossally smaller that the probability of a lay-man making the same error. Thus, all rational people always refer to certified experts in order to fulfil their needs. When someone wants to buy a house, he visits a specialized property appraiser. If he wants to construct a building, he goes looking for a qualified architect and civil engineer. Similar, anyone who wishes to gain knowledge about religious teachings and tenets must inadvertently seek out an expert religious scholar and jurisprudent.

However, since in matters of grave importance people are actually searching for truth, and not just any solution, they always prefer to consult and follow the directions of the leading, most learned and experienced of available scholars. This, too, is an instance of the said *Sīrah* (or collective behavior of rational people). In Islamic jurisprudence, such a *Faqīh* is known as *Ā'lam*. The rationale behind this behavior is that when multiple experts exist, the one bearing the greatest degree of knowledge, aptitude, skill and experience is better equipped with making a decision which mirrors reality. In other words, the probability of error is reduced even further. People always try to visit the more qualified doctor if the possibility of doing so presents itself. If a patient fails to consult the best physician, without having a good excuse to justify his failure in doing so, he will find himself being censured by his peers. Obviously, if a more qualified expert was not available, or there existed significant financial or other impediments in reaching him, then sufficing with the immediately available batch of scholars, despite their relatively inferior knowledge and skill, would certainly be deemed justifiable as well as sensible.

In conclusion, the obligation to emulate and follow a *Faqīh* is not an arbitrary one. We do not follow qualified Islamic jurisprudents because our whims, fancies or lustful desires lure us to do so. This emulation or *Taqlīd* is founded on the intellectually viable grounds of collective rational behavior. In finding the correct *Faqīh*, our criteria is knowledge, piety and justice, and whenever we find the *Ā'lam* from amongst all present Islamic jurisprudents, we follow him without fail, preferring his verdicts over all

others. As such, our acts are rooted only in intellectual and jurisprudentially credible standards, with unsubstantiated benchmarks such as nationality, language or ethnicity bearing no influence upon our decisions.

Similar Arguments of Westoxicated Individuals and Followers of the Pharaoh

It is said that today we must observe what international public opinion desires, and the criteria of our actions must be internationally accepted modern, westernized ideals. The technological developments of western civilization dictate that we must also follow suit if we are to achieve any semblance of development ourselves. According to this rationale, the Holy Prophet (s) should never have challenged the pre-dominant culture of his native homeland. He should never have raised the standard of monotheism, nor should he have opposed the rites, rituals and traditions of the Arabs and their ancestors. Likewise, the Prophet Mūsā (as) should never have rebelled against the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh had unprecedented power, commanded vast amounts of wealth and untold riches, and presided over the greatest civilization of his era, while being armed to the teeth with the latest technology and scientific developments of that age. Therefore, in light of the above logic, all people, including Mūsā (as), should have simply submitted themselves to the Pharaoh's supremacy. Is it not true that during the Pharaonic period, the kingdom of Egypt enjoyed unsurpassed scientific development and technology which represented itself in their successful construction of numerous huge pyramids? Even today, after thousands of years have passed, many aspects of the pyramids' mystery confuse modern

scientific understanding. This in itself stands as evidence suggesting that certain dimensions of ancient Egyptian knowledge were, in fact, more advanced than today's technology. In that day, the Pharaoh commanded people to fall in obedience before him because he ruled over vast and fertile lands, and commanded great power.

In an age when the Pharaoh believed himself to be the indisputable master of Egypt, when he enjoyed the support of a great civilization, when all forms of comforts surrounded him and his courtiers, Mūsā (as) approached his palace, in simple woolen attire, carrying a shepherd's staff, and proclaimed, "I am God's prophet and you must obey me." He did this when his own nation languished in captivity and he himself was far away from his native Canaan. When people saw him standing in front of the Pharaoh's palace, declaring his divinely ordained prophethood, they laughed at him. He would approach the Pharaoh's palace everyday but they would not allow him to meet the monarch. Inside, a jester would mimic Mūsā (as), ridiculing him for the amusement of the despot and his courtiers, and they would all laugh at his antics. Then, one day the Pharaoh declared that he wanted to see this *prophet* up close. Finally, Mūsā (as) gained access to his court and spoke to him personally.

The Pharaoh addressed Mūsā's (as) followers, saying, "Am I not the king of this expansive and fertile land of Egypt? Do I not command unparalleled power? Why do you choose to follow a weak and destitute man, who can barely speak,[1] instead of obeying someone like me who has such great authority, remarkable industry, advanced

1 It is said that Mūsā (as) used to stammer in his speech.

technology and unlimited resources at his disposal? How do you ignore all this amazing grandeur and affluence, and choose instead to follow a man lacking any kind of authority or significant worldly possessions?" God speaks of this affair as such:

﴿ وَنَادَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِۦ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهَٰذِهِ ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِيٓ ۖ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ أَمْ أَنَا۠ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هَٰذَا ٱلَّذِي هُوَ مَهِينٌ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِّن ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهُ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِينَ ﴾

"And Pharaoh proclaimed to his people, saying, 'O my people! Do not the kingdom of Egypt and these rivers that run at my feet belong to me? Do you not perceive? Am I not better than this wretch who cannot even speak clearly? Why have no bracelets of gold been thrown to him, nor do any angels accompany him as escorts?'"[1]

Abiding by Islamic Laws and Negating Western Ones

Now, if someone choses to abide by Pharaonic logic, and follows the West due to its advanced technological development, blinded by the glitter of their wealth and influence, then such a person is indeed engaged in a most irrational form of *Taqlīd*; *Taqlīd* that is blind and surely "monkey-like" in nature. Just because a certain people turn out to be more affluent than others, or achieve a certain

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Zukhruf: 51-53.

measure of development in science and industry, does not mean that they are equally developed in spiritual matters, or that they understand the universe and all that exists in a better way. Their material advancements do not qualify them to comprehend the true nature of existence. They do not know what true human excellence entails and are unaware of what is truly "fruitful" and what is objectively "harmful" in the larger frame of existence. Their wealth and apparent development does not render them more qualified to form better laws to govern human life and society. We can utilize their scientific knowledge, but their laws are not more suitable than Islamic ones. Indeed, after understanding the essential superiority of Islamic laws, it is utterly irrational to follow western ones. We believe that the divine laws revealed to us by God Almighty, and explained by His Blessed Messenger (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as) are, in fact, superior to any laws that may exist anywhere else. These laws were brought to us by individuals who enjoyed divinely granted infallibility and, thus, their teachings in this regard are flawless and constitute the perfect example for all to follow.

Today, when we find ourselves deprived of such infallible leaders, we follow and emulate the *Marāji'* instead. We do this because, firstly, they are the closest to the Immaculate Imams (as) in terms of their behavior, piety, justice and virtue, and secondly, because they are experts in the science of Islamic jurisprudence. As such, referring to these experts follows the same logical principle as the one we see in action when sick people refer themselves to their respective doctors. In short, the obedience in question is entirely based on the precepts of collective rational

behavior. In contrast, people who blindly follow western culture in all aspects of their lives, mystified by its technological material advancements, are in fact engaged in "monkey-like" and irrational behavior. Do they not realize that contemporary western civilization is founded upon hypocrisy and trickery, where outwardly beautiful slogans like freedom, democracy and human rights are used to control and subjugate other nations?

In the American Presidential Elections of 2000, George Bush Jr. failed to win a majority against his rival candidate and it became well-known that the electoral process had been rigged. Finally, the American Supreme Court was charged to decide who had actually won the said elections. This apex judicial body, made up of seven judges, decided in favor of George Bush by a four to one ratio. The four judges who voted for Bush, a Republican Party candidate, were themselves supporters of the Republican Party. It was this shameless farce that won the subsequent American administration its legitimacy! Now, is this the ideal we want for ourselves? Is this the kind of government we wish to rule over us? Should we not be grateful, instead, for having a system that is headed by a leader who draws his legitimacy from being foremost in terms of knowledge, piety and administrative capability and acumen? Should we not be pleased that we are led by someone who is genuinely compassionate towards the people, who works for them and not for personal gain, who lives in the utmost of simplicity and, thus, is closest in his ways and manners to the Immaculate Imams (as)?

What happens to all their self-serving slogans of human-rights and freedom when faced with Zionist atrocities against innocent Palestinian Civilians? Such is the brazen

hypocrisy of their politics that even their own people have grown weary of their unconditional support of Zionist crimes. Today, their own citizens feel ashamed of calling themselves American or European. Are these the governments and cultures that we should emulate?

What sense is there in abandoning the obedience of Almighty God's holy prophets, apostles, the Immaculate Imams (as) and those who bear the most resemblance to them in the present, people who have a spotless character and flawless credibility, only to adopt leaders and role-models who personify sexual deviation, moral degradation, financial dishonesty, embezzlement and electoral fraud? Wasn't the last American President (Bill Clinton) involved in adultery and fornication? Isn't their current president (George Bush Jr.) implicated in financial crime, even though he has managed to use his political sway and influence to keep these allegations under wraps? With such a sorry state of affairs, is it accurate to say that the United States enjoys the world's best government and unparalleled democracy?

From the beginning of the Islamic Revolution to this very day, can anyone seriously find even a single spot of economic or moral wrong-doing within the private or public lives of the late Imam (ra) or his rightful successor, Ayatollah Khāmeneī? Has anyone ever made any serious allegations accusing these two personalities of amassing wealth for themselves or their families, or for granting special privileges and favors to their friends? Is it not a blatant and flagrant act of ingratitude to Almighty God's mercy that we compare such exceptional leaders to the heads of state of other countries and nations? It is not sheer thanklessness to desire the downfall of this system

of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (guardianship of the jurisprudent), hoping for it to be replaced by a western styled sham-democracy with a president at the helm of affairs instead of a *Faqīh*, so that these so-called "reforms" turn out to be successful and we end up winning empty praise from western powers, and the admirations of the likes of Salman Rushdie? Recently, I have read that Salman Rushdie, in an article published within a newspaper called New York Times, has expressed sadness with reference to the sentence handed down by Iranian courts to Āghā Jarī, his accomplice in crime.

﴿أَلَمۡ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ بَدَّلُواْ نِعۡمَتَ ٱللَّهِ كُفۡرٗا وَأَحَلُّواْ قَوۡمَهُمۡ دَارَ ٱلۡبَوَارِ﴾

"Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude, and landed their people in the house of ruin?"[1]

1. The Holy Qurān, Ibrāhīm: 28.

LECTURE SEVEN
ISLAM AND LIBERALISM REGARDING TRADITION, BELIEFS AND VALUES

Another Look at the Instances Wherein *Taqlīd* is Necessary

Taqlīd or emulation in religion is based upon intellectual evidence and collective rational human behavior. The key question is: Where and how to do *Taqlīd?* Is it possible or permissible to do *Taqlīd* in all areas and realms of knowledge? Or are we only allowed to do so in certain circumstances? There are situations where there is no need to follow expert opinion. For instance, the question about life existing on Mars has no bearing on our individual or communal lives. As such, the intellect finds no need for us to follow or emulate an expert with reference to this query. We are only duty-bound to do *Taqlīd* in issues that directly or indirectly affect our lives, in this world or the next, in a significant way. Only in such cases are we faced with the possibility of imminent danger. The mind perceives this danger and instructs us to avert it. Now, it becomes our responsibility to either gain the knowledge needed to avert the said calamity personally, or follow someone who already enjoys this status.

Within religion, it is mandatory for believers to learn the principles taught by God Almighty and His prophets and to perform the duties and rituals made compulsory upon them by the same. As a result, any failure to act in this manner, out of sloth or negligence, is deemed a sin,

punishable by God Almighty. On the other hand, keeping in mind that reaching a level of *Ijtihād* (or full expertise) in all the teachings, tenets and doctrines of Islam is, in fact, a daunting task, practically impossible for a vast majority of people, the only choice left for most of us is to follow the views of those who have dedicated their lives to this form of research. This type of *Taqlīd* goes beyond mere jurisprudence and effectively encompasses a far greater scope of ideas, beliefs and ideological issues.

To understand the full extent of such *Taqlīd*, we must first analyze religion itself to see what areas of thought and practice it addresses within its teachings. When we study religion, we realize that there exist four major categories wherein we must follow expert opinion. The number of these categories is based on simple induction, although we have no conclusive intellectual proof to limit them to only four. In the future, with more research and greater analysis, we may realize that further categories also exist.

The first category deals with beliefs. Beliefs signify affirmative statements and ontological convictions which we consider to be true and in line with objective reality. These ideas reflect what we consider to exist or not exist in the universe and beyond. As such, they are made of sentences using the semantic functions "is/are" or "is/are not". For instance, we state that "God is", meaning that He exists, and that "The Hereafter is real", meaning that there is life after death, or we acclaim that "The prophets are Almighty God's messengers to humanity" etc. Therefore, the first category relates to propositions which seek to state facts.

The second category deals with values**.** These are statements of what must or must not be done and, thus, are instructive in nature, seeking to direct conscious human behavior instead of simply molding human perceptions, as was true for beliefs. For instance, it is said that "One must speak the truth" or that "Falsehood is bad and must not be practiced". These propositions do not reflect any form of external reality. They are simply statements which provide positive or negative valuations for our actions. "Truth" bears a positive value and, thus, must be practiced, while "falsehood" suffers a negative appraisal and must, therefore, be shunned. However, this does not mean that values are arbitrary in nature. There exists a definite link between reality and the value system we draw from that reality. In other words, there is a close bond between our world-view and our ideology. Once we come to accept a certain set of beliefs, e.g. the existence of Almighty God, His prophets and the Day of Judgment, we find ourselves faced with a certain collection of values. For instance, a conviction that God Almighty exists immediately begets a responsibility to obey Him and win His divine approval. This, in turn, makes all efforts aimed at serving Him, in accordance to what He Himself commands, positive acts. Similarly, serving humanity, as they are His beloved creation, becomes commendable. In contrast, disobeying His commandments and ignoring society's interests are both instances of negative behavior.

The third category deals with techniques employed in the realization of our values. Even though the contents of these techniques remains the same, their form changes over time to suit prevalent circumstances and utilize newly available potentials. For instance, "security" is a core and

permanent value within human society, but the ways and methods used for the provision of security alter from era to era.

The fourth category deals with apparatus. Provided that no inherent limitations exist in doing *Taqlīd* with reference to a particular tool, all tools are essentially inert in terms of ideological and ethical value and can, therefore, be procured and utilized with complete freedom. For instance, language, in its spoken or written form, does not bear any ideological or moral baggage. It is simply a medium for human-beings to communicate with one another. As such, we learn languages in order to converse with people who do not speak the same language as ourselves. In doing so, we can learn a language from any available source open to us, whether it be Muslim or not.

The Different Instances of *Taqlīd*

Is it correct to do *Taqlīd* in matters related to the first of the above categories i.e. beliefs and convictions? Is it correct to follow the prophets and, after them, the experts in such issues? Are the teachings of the prophets and the opinions of the experts dependable in these matters? To answer these questions we must first decide upon the criteria separating correct *Taqlīd* from incorrect *Taqlīd*. What makes a certain instance of *Taqlīd* correct is its acknowledgement by the intellect. The veracity of Almighty God's Prophet (s), especially after the existence of miracles, is established by the intellect conclusively. The intellect also determines that he is infallible and immune to error and sin. Consequently, it instructs us to follow him and emulate his example. The most fundamental principles of faith are not subject to *Taqlīd* or

emulation. These are the precepts on which everything else is built and which the intellect can independently discover through rational analysis and firm argumentation. These core ideas are to be proven by the intellect entirely by logical reasoning. Thus, one cannot follow the opinions of any experts, not even an infallible prophet or apostle, while endorsing the said beliefs. Such convictions include the existence of God Almighty and the existence of prophethood. Clearly, until and unless a person in convinced of Almighty God's existence, it would be meaningless to imagine that he would feel any compulsion towards following the instructions of a prophet. Non-essential, secondary articles of belief, that the intellect is incapable of deriving self-sufficiently, are indeed subject to *Taqlīd*. People can rely on revealed texts and narrated traditions in order to form such convictions. For instance, once we have successfully established, through the intellect's efforts alone, the existence of divine prophethood and have also endorsed the prophethood of the Holy Messenger (s), we are still at a loss, intellectually speaking, at proving that the Blessed Prophet (s) is also the final of Almighty God's sacred messengers. This finality within prophethood can, however, be understood through evidence found in the Holy Qurān. Similarly, once the intellect independently concedes that the Blessed Messenger (s) was indeed Almighty God's chosen Apostle, it automatically accepts God's revealed message through him as true. Nevertheless, the intellect cannot self-reliantly verify the probative validity of those teachings and practices which the Prophet of Islam (s) engaged in but are not explicitly mentioned in the Qurān. To recognize their authority, one needs to rely on additional proof; proof provided to us within the Holy Qurān itself wherein it

commands all Muslims to obey the Prophet (s) unconditionally.

When the Holy Prophet (s) speaks of matters not mentioned in detail within the Holy Qurān such as particulars about *Barzakh* (or purgatory), the Hereafter, the torments of the grave etc., we are duty bound to accept the information he gives us. If the same data had been present within the Holy Qurān, we would have accepted it based upon the intellectual necessity of Qurānic accuracy. This came after the intellect's independent corroboration of the Prophet's (s) divinely granted office and his immaculacy to error and wrong-doing. However, all information not present within the text of the Sacred Qurān, and which the mind cannot singly verify, needs additional proof in order to win any sort of confirmation. In our case, this additional body of evidence is made up of Qurānic verses wherein God Almighty endorses all of the Holy Prophet's (s) words and deed regardless of whether they are mentioned within the Holy Qurān or not.

Unconditional Acknowledgement of the *Sunnah* (The Prophet's (s) Words and Practices)

Anyhow, our solemn belief in the prophethood of the Blessed Messenger (s) dictates that we accept everything that he taught us. Although all his teachings may not have reached us in their full detail, we are still duty-bound to believe that whatever he may have taught was indeed the truth. We are duty-bound to recognize the indisputable veracity of all these teachings, even though we may lack intellectual reasoning to verify or reject some of the instances, therein.

Even so, the intellect itself directs us to recognize them with complete certitude since it has already established the Holy Prophet's (s) divine mission and his absolute infallibility. If we fail to acknowledge some of these teachings, we have failed to have full faith in his prophethood. Consequently, we must realize that the "faith" which ensures eternal triumph, driving away the threat of eternal damnation, is faith in the totality of what the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculates (as) have taught us, not partial faith in arbitrarily chosen laws, tenets and ideas.

Keeping this in mind, can a person honestly claim to have faith in the Holy Prophet's (s) prophethood while rejecting some of his teachings? If, for instance, an individual had personally heard the Blessed Messenger (s) declare Imam 'Alī (as) as his rightful successor and, after having done so, still went on to reject the latter's succession and imamate, would he be considered a true believer? If such a person truly believes that the Messenger (s) is Almighty God's chosen apostle whose every word and action is guided by Almighty God's own will, how can he allow himself to reject some of his teachings? If we witness someone who knows that the Holy Prophet (s) ordered us to pray the *Fajr* prayers before sun-rise but questions the wisdom of this command saying, "What difference does it make whether we pray before or after sunrise?" We must realize that this person is, in fact, deficient in belief and devoid of faith. Similarly, when someone professing true faith sees that *Ṣalāt* (or daily ritual prayer) has indeed been sanctioned within the Holy Qurān, but its details, pre-requisite conditions and methods are only mentioned within the Blessed Messenger's (s) traditions, he

immediately accepts both without the slightest bit of reservation.

Based on the above, we understand that the jurisprudential verdict of the *Fuqahā* regarding apostasy with reference to people who knowingly deny the necessary tenets of faith is, in reality, a verdict that deals with the demonstrable dimension of this issue. Apostasy also encompasses all knowing rejections of even the most minor teachings of Islam. If a person denies so much as a word that the Holy Prophet (s) uttered, while knowing that this word belongs to Almighty God's Messenger (s), then he has committed apostasy in his heart and soul, even if this crime may not be sufficiently evident to be subject to jurisprudential reprimand. Simply put, faith is not divisible and, therefore, it is impossible to have faith in certain divine laws and teachings while denying others. One cannot choose to have faith only in that which his or her mind accepts or comprehends and reject all else. There are many things that the intellect is essentially incapable of understanding. This is exactly why God Almighty has granted mankind with another source of knowledge called divine revelation. In fact, if the intellect enjoyed the ability of comprehending everything, there would have not been any need for revelation in the first place. Thus, it is impossible to consider the intellect sufficient for discovering all reality, deeming it the only source of guidance. Rather, we need revelation to complement our intellects, so that they can work together to guarantee our prosperity in this life and the Hereafter.

Secondly, even though Islam stresses the desirability of personally understanding all the various major and minor tenets of faith, it must be recognized that such personal

comprehension, and the diligently detailed research it requires, is not attainable for a vast majority of Muslims. As such, an overall acknowledgment, even without having researched all the various details of all the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculates (as) would suffice to secure their faiths. Obviously, this general acknowledgement should also be unconditional in nature. For instance, if a person does not know whether the *Mi'rāj* (or the Prophet's (s) miraculous night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem to the Heavens and back) was merely a spiritual affair or also a physical one, he should not deny either possibility by saying that he would only believe in it if it were exclusively spiritual in nature and not physical. Rather, he should declare that he accepts, without any pre-conditions, all that which the Holy Prophet (s) has stated in this regard.

Negation of the *Sunnah* (The Prophet's (s) Traditions) and *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) Under the Guise of Cultural Reconstruction

One of the fundamental articles of our faith, as devout Muslims, deals with the finality of the Sacred Messenger's (s) prophethood. This finality makes Islam an eternal religion, lending its laws timeless validity. Consequently, based on the firm conviction that the Holy Prophet (s) is indeed the last of Almighty God's apostles, all his divinely inspired teachings, the absolute truth, will remain applicable till the end of time. Islam, along with its laws and code of life, is not limited to any specific time period. Given these facts, if a person were to claim, that the religion of Islam and the Blessed Messenger's (s) prophethood were time bound in nature, with Islamic laws

bearing expiry dates (up until about five hundred or a thousand years later), rendering them totally irrelevant and inapplicable in today's modern world, then such a person would in fact be devoid of faith. Similarly, if it were to be asserted that technological development, coupled with advances in human knowledge and intellectual maturity, have effectively turned the teachings and directions of the Holy Prophet (s) totally redundant within our age, and that mankind no longer requires such instructions because it is fully capable of securing its own prosperity through collective human wisdom and man-made laws, then such an assertion would also be an expression of faithlessness and disbelief. In light of such claims, would having faith in the Prophet Muhammad (s) be any different than having faith in the Prophets Īsā (as) or Mūsā (as)? We Muslims believe that Mūsā's (as) laws and teachings remained valid in their entirety up until the time of Īsā (as), while being partially changed after the latter was sent as Almighty God's messenger. Likewise, Īsā's (as) prophethood, as well as the laws he preached, remained valid up until the time of the Final Messenger (s). However, when the Prophet Muhammad (s) began his mission, Īsā's (as) mission ended and some of the laws preached by him were also changed. Now, if someone were to make claims about the Holy Messenger's (s) prophethood being time-bound, with Islamic laws applicable only to a certain time period, and becoming obsolete afterwards, then what is the difference between such a person's belief regarding the Holy Prophet (s) and other Divine Prophets (as)?

Today, certain so-called liberal Muslim thinkers are promoting an idea that the Holy Prophet's (s) era has come to a close, and that Islamic laws should no longer be

applied since their time has passed. Some notable leaders of certain political parties have openly declared that Islamic jurisprudence needs to be altered, with sections of it explicitly deleted, in order for it to conform to democratic standards. Similarly, we saw Āghā Jarī, a man now convicted for apostasy, saying that religion is not only the opiate of the masses but also the opiate of governments. Has Islamic jurisprudence and Almighty God's holy law been granted to us so that we change it according to our wishes, only to render it compatible with western liberal democracy? Can a person who shamelessly attacks Islamic laws, and calls religion an opiate infecting both governments and the masses be considered a Muslim? When people who should be working to defend religion call for major alterations in Islamic jurisprudence, is it not time to set off some alarm bells? When some people issue declarations claiming that the application of Islamic laws is contrary to national interests, or when certain clergymen announce that it is no longer correct to cut off thieves' hands because such a punishment was only meant to be a deterrent and this can now be achieved through other means, can it truly be claimed that these people accept the authority of Islamic laws? We must seriously worry that, in the future, such individuals may even be elevated to the status of Ayatollahs by various vested interests so that they could easily play with Islam and its laws as they please.

Ten years ago, when Imam Khumaynī (ra) issued his famous edict proclaiming Salman Rushdie as an apostate and sentencing him to death, he noted with great foresight and worry that, ten years onwards, certain people would spring up saying that this edict was in contradiction to the

norms of diplomacy. That great man clearly saw that one day things would take such a sorry turn that people would not only question the edict against Salman Rushdie, but the criminal himself would also express sadness over a similar verdict handed down to his accomplice in Iran, saying that "Islamic extremists could no longer be trusted, and if Islamic moderates failed to institute a comprehensive reconstruction of Islamic culture via Islamic Protestantism, then this responsibility would fall upon the shoulders of *Rushdies* everywhere." One must ask, "Is cultural reconstruction equivalent to creating large scale alterations within Islamic jurisprudence in order to render it compatible with western liberalism, insulting sacrosanct Islamic ideals, doubting the infallibility of the prophets and claiming that Islamic teachings and laws have become obsolete?"

Islam and Liberalism vis-à-vis Values and Beliefs

We believe that the foundational divine values of religion are immutable and permanent. They cannot simply change over time and become vices. However, people who deny the applicability of religion, as well as those who believe that values are based upon the whims of the people, deem them to be flexible, transitory and impermanent in nature. These people are convinced that values can turn into vices over time, as conditions change, while the opposite is also possible. For instance, homosexuality used to be a vice in the western world but has become a value today, and some people even feel proud of being its proponents. They claim that by promoting this behavior they are saving their governments a lot of money and averting the so-called population explosion. We, on the other hand, consider

Islamic beliefs, articles of faith, ethical values and religious laws to be permanent and unchanging, while holding them to be universal and not exclusive to any particular time or region. This is true regardless of whether the intellect understands the said convictions independently, like the essential virtue of justice and the inherent vice of injustice, or does so with the help of other valid sources of knowledge, like the various laws regarding the "prohibited" and the "permissible", laws that the mind cannot derive on its own and which were revealed to us by the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculates (as). Although, it must be noted that all things understood conclusively by the intellect as it acts independently are also confirmed by divine sanction. Likewise, independent intellectual discovery forms one of the sources of law within Islamic jurisprudence. In short, all the beliefs, values and laws recognized by the intellect while working self-sufficiently, or derived by it through the intermediacy of other verified sources, are considered by us to be permanent, universal and immutable. Additionally, when certain apparent changes do occur in these laws, they happen only within the strict parameters of defined jurisprudential principles and, in reality, are reflective of certain changes within the subjects of those laws, and not the laws themselves.

In western culture, while trying to create changes within religion so as to provide the grounds for its total removal from human life, writers within the field of the Philosophy of Religion came up with the idea of dividing religious doctrines into two sections: the "shell" and the "pearl". They explained the meaning of religion's "shell" and "pearl", or its "crust" and "fruit", by saying, "The pearl or

fruit of religion represents the inherent essence of religious teachings, whereas the shell or crust signifies the subsidiary and periphery elements of religious belief. Only the pearl and fruit of religion enjoys immutability and permanence, while its shell and crust are susceptible to changes in their environment, always changing in response to any changes within their contextual circumstances. As such, when it comes to the shell and crust, there exist no permanent principle and we can adopt new ideas to match emerging situations, only to replace them with even newer concepts as things evolve further with time." Following their lead, the so-called liberal Islamic thinkers imported these ideas into our society. Based on this pattern of thinking, they declared that most of the necessary articles of Islamic faith, ethical values and laws are, in fact, Islam's proverbial "shell" or "crust". Consequently, they proposed that these outdated doctrines be put away and replaced with new ideas. In explaining what constituted the "pearl" or "fruit" of Islam, they stated, "The essential teaching of Islam is that we should not consider man to be God Almighty. Apart from this, everything else is secondary and, therefore, Islam's shell or crust can easily be replaced. In their opinion, even believing in Almighty God's existence is not essential to religion. This means that people can be religious, while not believing in God Almighty at the same time. However, in the Holy Qurān's view, one must accept all of Islam's teachings, beliefs, values and laws, regardless of whether they are derived by the intellect independently or by way of revelation etc. As such, if a person denies even an iota of the things taught by God Almighty and His Apostle (s), he will in effect be an apostate and disbeliever, whether this apostasy be apparent or hidden. If his denial is not public, we will not

consider him jurisprudentially liable, and we will continue treating him as a Muslim with all the privileges. Nevertheless, spiritually speaking he is no longer a believer and if he dies in that state, he will enter Hellfire in the Hereafter, as an apostate.

Therefore, it is our responsibility to solemnly believe in all articles of faith which have already been established intellectually or otherwise. In turn, someone who lacks *Ijtihād* (or full expertise) in these fields is duty-bound to do *Taqlīd* with reference to them. However, when it comes to the practices of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as), we are only obliged to follow them if it becomes know that the practice in question reflected a religious law. In contrast, *Taqlīd* is not necessary in methods which were only employed as tools, under the specific influence of circumstances prevalent during the said era, and which do not reflect any religious commandments working in their background. For instance, the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) spoke Arabic in their daily lives simply because they lived in Arab society. We, however, have no obligation to do the same. Similarly, if they wore certain kinds of shoes and clothes, or lived in mud brick houses with date-tree leaves and branches as roofs, we are not duty-bound to wear the same attire or live in comparable homes. We can, nonetheless, choose to adopt some of these practices as an expression of our profound love for them. If we do so, our behavior would reach the zenith of submission before Almighty God's Apostle (s) and His chosen saints (as). 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī's (ra) teacher in moral issues and his trainer in Islamic mysticism had instructed him to read the entire *Bihār al-Anwār* in order to extract all instances of

the behavior of the Holy Prophet (s) and his sacred progeny (as). Once extracted from this voluminous compilation of narrated traditions (consisting of 120 volumes), the late 'Allāmah was supposed to emulate all these practices in his personal life. The book *Sunan al-Nabī*, written by 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī (ra) is a collection of the traditions he extracted during this research. Through his studies, he came across a tradition which said that the Holy Prophet (s) enjoyed eating shrimps and, as a result, he started doing the same.

Criticism Regarding the Invalidity of Emulating Religious Sages

Some people point out certain practices of the Holy Prophet (s) and his sacred progeny (as) that are difficult to emulate in the current age. When it is proposed that contemporary women should follow the example of Lady Fāṭimah Zahrā (as), does it mean that they should wear clothes with patches on them and eat bread, made at home, from wheat ground personally from barley? Is such a life style possible for today's women? If not, then why are the people invited towards following these religious sages?

In order to dispel this fallacy, and to clarify what following Lady Fāṭimah (as), Imam 'Alī (as) and the other religious sages actually means, we will provide two answers. The first will be short and precise, while the second will be detailed.

The short answer is: If any given practice of these religious sages is motivated by a religious law and we discover this by studying the act itself or other pieces of contextual evidence available to us, then emulating this

practice would be obligatory. On the other hand, if we are sure that the act in question is not prompted by the existence of a religious law, and that its nature is simply ancillary, then there is no responsibility to follow it. However, in cases where the nature of the said practice is not clear, and we cannot discern whether it constitutes an act that must be emulated or not, then we must consult a qualified expert in Islamic sciences so that he may deduce for us the exact nature of the practice under scrutiny. The expert will utilize his knowledge of the traditions and biographies of the Immaculates (as) so as to discover whether the deed being analyzed is obligatory, recommended, discouraged or prohibited in the jurisprudential sense.

As for the detailed answer, it must be said that the acts of religious sages can be dissected into two sections: the form and the content. The form of their actions may vary from time to time, and place to place, based upon the conditions that surround them. This might show that emulating the form, in itself, is not necessary. However, the soul of their actions always remains the same. It is constant, and must therefore be emulated. For instance, Lady Fāṭimah (as) used to sift barley, clean it and then grind it into flour to bake bread at home. The form and shape of her actions involved tools and methods that were available during that era, and are no longer applicable during modern times. Today, food is cooked in much easier ways. However, the soul of her actions was that she strived and did her best to help her husband by shouldering some of the responsibilities of their domestic life. This soul is permanent, and must be emulated by women in the contemporary world. If Lady Fāṭīmah (as)

gave away her wedding dress in charity to the poor on the night of her marriage to Imam 'Alī (as), or gave away her own portion of bread to a hunger beggar right before sunset after having fasted all day, all these actions consist of an outer form as well as an inner soul. The exterior form of these deeds involves clothing made of coarse fabric (the best kind of attire a middle class woman could own in those days) and bread baked from barley flour (the best kind of food available to middle class families). However, the soul of these actions involves giving away in charity things that you love or need yourself. If someone wants to emulate this great woman, he must part with items which most please him or which he himself requires, giving them away to the destitute. This is the kind of pious sacrifice that personifies Lady Fāṭīmah's practices, not acts of token charity that we normally engage in today when we donate old and worn out things, which we no longer need or like.

﴿لَن تَنَالُواْ ٱلۡبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُواْ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِن شَيۡءٖ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِهِۦ عَلِيمٞ﴾

"You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear, and whatever you may spend of anything, Allah indeed knows it."[1]

Narrated traditions inform us that Amīr al-Muminīn 'Alī (as) used to eat a very coarse type of bread made from dry barley. This bread was so hard to break that sometimes he had to push it against his knees in order to tear it apart. In that period of history within Arab society, simple barley

1. The Holy Qurān, Āal-i 'Imrān: 92.

bread was the staple diet of common people, but the poor were even unable to earn that much. This was why giving away barley bread was common practice amongst the people. They would give it to the poor as *Zakāt* (obligatory poor dues in Islamic law) and it would be sufficient to meet their requirements for the day. Today, nevertheless, people qualify to receive *Zakāt* even if they have enough money to buy their daily food rations. To qualify for *Zakāt* one must be "poor" as defined by Islamic jurisprudence. This definition dictates that all individuals who lack enough resources to live a medium and normal level of life in society are to be regarded as poor. As such, food makes up only a small portion of the basket of goods that need to be taken into account for calculating whether or not someone qualifies for *Zakāt* today. In the past, even affluent families living here in Qum could not afford an air cooler. Many could not even afford a simple fan. During the scorching summers, they would take refuge from the heat in underground chambers built within their homes. However, things have changed greatly in the present era. Most people own air coolers, and if someone does not, then it is permissible to buy one for him from *Zakāt* money.

The essence of Imam 'Alī's (as) actions was that officials within an Islamic system were duty-bound to live in a manner lower than the average life-style of common citizens. Emulating him does not mean that we should start living in mud brick houses, a form that is not relevant anymore. The essence of his ways and manners, however, is relevant and can be emulated easily.

LECTURE EIGHT
THE THEORY OF LEGAL RELATIVISM

The Background of the Call for Reformation in Religion

Anti-religious groups, serving the agenda of neo-imperialist powers, endeavor to weaken the people's religious convictions, create disagreements, split society from within, and break it up into numerous socio-political sects. This is the motive behind spreading slogans such as "fundamentalist", "traditionalist", "conservative", "liberal", "modernist" and "reformist" etc. Normally, the people who disseminate these concepts are people who have no belief in Islamic teachings. The contextual proof available to us clearly highlights the malicious nature of these activities. When they prescribe these titles to their ideological opponents, and describe themselves as "modernist Muslims", "supporters of reform", "proponents of development" and "opponents of extremism" etc., their true purpose is to defame Islam, while maintaining an Islamic guise, to spread their own heretical ideas freely amongst Muslims.

Calls for religious reformation and Islamic Protestantism are new in our country. In fact, there exists a long history attached to such deviant proposals. As far as we know, the first person to raise these slogans was a Freemason named Fatḥ'Ali Ākhundzādeh, popularly known as Ākhundov. Soon after him, his other Freemason brethren promptly followed his lead. Even today, groups calling themselves

"religious-nationalists" and "enlightened Muslims", follow steadfastly in Ākhundov's steps, presenting exactly the same arguments that he presented many years ago. In some cases, they even use the same words, terms and sentences as those spoken and written by Ākhundov and his friends. The gist of their proposals is that we should retain the outer semblance of Islam and Islamic teachings, while altering the inner reality of society in its entirety.

Disparity within Religious Source Texts

Anti-religious activists striving to manufacture a counterfeit version of Islam, which could better suit their own ulterior motives, constantly try to shed doubt upon the authenticity of Islamic source texts. As different tactics within their strategy, they present various false interpretations of religious ideas, as well as tamper with historical facts related to the lives of the Holy Prophet (a) and the Immaculate Imams (as). In both cases, they try to paint Islamic teachings and history in a light that favors their own materialist goals. In one such instance of historical falsification, they claim that after the beginning of his mission as Almighty God's prophet, the Prophet Muhammad (s) was subjected to great persecution and pressure by the people of Makkah. After he migrated to Madinah, having consolidated his position there and enjoying the support of the local population, he decided to exact vengeance on his old home town. This desire for retribution led to the battle of Badr as well as other military expeditions that followed, and from there onwards the Prophet's (s) entire life was mired by a series of armed conflicts. In conclusion, they state that the Prophet (s) answered violence with more violence.

Similarly, their interpretation of Imam 'Alī's (as) biography states that after the Holy Prophet's (s) demise, 'Alī (as) was brought to the mosque so that he may pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr and, therefore, forgo his own right to the caliphate. After many years, the political situation changed. 'Alī (as) was approached by the people, pledging their loyalty to him as the new caliph of the Islamic State. When he finally gained power, he immediately started waging a vendetta against his enemies, spending the entirety of his reign engaged in bloody battles. After his martyrdom, Imam Ḥasan (as) rose to power and continued the military campaign against Muawiyah, only to be defeated and forced into signing a peace treaty with his enemy. After him, his brother Imam Ḥusayn (as) followed the same path. Initially he waited for a good opportunity and when he found one, he rose up in rebellion, leading to the tragedy of Karbala, wherein he experienced defeat and was martyred. Thus, from the time of the Holy Prophet (s) up to the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (as), the Ahl al-Bayt (as) remained preoccupied with bloody battles and military conflicts. This ruinous policy was finally altered by Imam Ḥusayn's (as) successors who traded in the sword for lasting peace.

The proponents of the above opinions present us with three theories to explain these apparent disparities within the Immaculates (as) decisions:-

1. Islam has within itself two different sets of laws, and when the first was repealed, only the second remained valid. This means that until the time of Imam Ḥusayn (as), Islamic law dictated that Muslims must fight their enemies, employing all forms of violence to subdue them. However, from that period onwards this law was

annulled and an entirely different law, dictating the necessity of peaceful co-existence and tolerance came into full effect. Therefore, keeping this in mind, we cannot accept that Islamic laws are permanent and immutable in nature. Consequently, fundamentalism and principlist policies are also unacceptable. Following the same line of argument, Islamic laws and punishments are all time-bound in validity and temporary in jurisdiction. Thus, penalties such as cutting off thieves' hands, flagellation, and the death penalty, are all obsolete forms of justice that have no place within modern society.

2. Religious saints harbored two different interpretations of Islamic teachings, leading to two completely conflicting styles of behavior. Until the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (as), they believed that they must fight their enemies at all costs. Therefore, their behavior was marked with violence and intolerance. After this period, the interpretation of religious concepts by subsequent Imams (as) changed completely. Now, they believed that war and violence were to be abandoned, choosing instead to deal with their enemies through tolerance, leniency and reconciliation. Therefore, true Islam remains a mystery to us since we find ourselves presented with two conflicting paradigms within the lives of our religious saints. If we accept the doctrine of infallibility, we must conclude that both these divergent interpretations are valid. This, in turn, is equal to the modern concept of religious pluralism. Given these circumstances, any assertion regarding the existence of immutable religious principles that are permanent in nature must certainly be disregarded. We must accept

that there exist multiple interpretations of religious teachings, all of which are equally valid. Neither Shia Islam represents definitive truth, nor the Sunni school of Islamic thought. Proponents of modernism should not criticize the thoughts and actions of traditionalist and traditionalist should refrain from attacking modernist ideas and actions. Keeping in mind that even our Imams (as) entertained vastly divergent interpretations of Islam, we must also acknowledge the various, although conflicting, comprehensions of Islamic doctrines and laws that exist today. As such, we must tolerate each other and act with mutual acceptance, trying to resolve any disagreements through dialogue.

3. The beliefs, policies and conduct of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) until the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (as) were, God forbid, essentially flawed. The subsequent Imams (as) realized the inherent error and impracticality of these strategies. Their eyes opened by the sheer weight of experience, leading them to change their directions and convictions. Thus, they steered Shia Islam away from violence and war towards peace and harmony. This change represented a major reformation of ideology and constituted a critical act of evolution within the Shia school of Islamic thought. From the time of Imam 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn (as), the Shia Imams (as) acted in accordance with varying policies suited to the prevalent circumstances. Some of these policies failed, leading the Imams (as) to suffer long periods of imprisonment, while others were successful like the ones employed by Imam 'Alī al-Riḍā (as), who rose to become heir apparent to the caliph of his time. These ups and downs

within the history of the Imams (as), sprinkled with periods of victory as well as failure, stand as ample evidence that the Imams (as) were also prone to errors in judgment. As their collective socio-political experience grew over time, they acutely analyzed their mistakes and took steps in order to amend their tactics, choosing more advanced strategies for future ventures. Thus, the idea of their actions being divinely guided and infallible against error and sin is simply not correct. They, like the rest of humanity, made various slip-ups and suffered from different faults within their appraisal of affairs. Based on this evaluation of historical events, the presence of permanent and immutable principles within Islam is automatically invalidated. So is the doctrine of infallibility and immaculacy which the Shia school of thought holds as one of its articles of belief. In fact, the opposite of this proposition is shown to be true, as the Imams (as) are displayed as people prone to errors. This effectively eliminates the halo of sacredness that traditionally surrounded them and led people to believe that their words and actions were somehow holy and beyond question. Obviously, once convinced of the accuracy of these conclusions, one will realize that the doctrine of apostolic infallibility has nothing to do with Islam but is, in fact, an invention of the Shia clergy.

Once having proven the existence of severe differences amongst the policies of the various Imams (as), it becomes clear that such differences of verdict must be even more common-place during the age of occultation. With no access to an Imam (as), today's scholars and the *Marāji'*, who have never considered themselves infallible, are even

more prone to understanding Islam differently. Evidence of such conflicting views regarding Islamic teachings can be found within the disagreements that these scholars have amongst themselves when it comes to jurisprudential edicts. Throughout the age of occultation, these jurisprudential disagreements have been present within the clergy. For instance, in the past they issued a verdict banning girls from attending schools. Then, as circumstances changed, they allowed girls to go to school and even sent their own daughters there. Thus, they first deemed it *Ḥarām* (or prohibited) and later turned it around, declaring it to be *Ḥalāl* (or permissible). This shows that the edicts of these *Marāji'* are also time-bound and provisional in their validity and jurisdiction, changing with times and circumstances. Even at one given time there exist several examples of conflicting edicts dealing with one particular subject, while simultaneously this difference is taken to be completely acceptable. All this shows that intellectual pluralism prevails within the Islamic academia already. Therefore, there is no point in beating one's drum about immutable and permanent principles and laws. No such thing exists, neither are there any constants within the biographies and traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

This is how so-called proponents of "ideological review" and "pluralism" justify a cultural shift within society and academia. Their proposal involves us embracing pluralism and acknowledging that no permanent teachings exist within Islam. As such, it is acceptable for people to concoct any number of conflicting interpretations of Islamic doctrine, all of which must be considered equally valid and correct. In short, the agenda being promoted by

these agents of international neo-imperialism is to deprive our people of their permanent and absolute religious ideals, chief amongst them being the doctrine of apostolic infallibility which says that the Holy Prophet (s) and the Imams (as) are immaculate and, thus, immune to error or sin. Another key target of this mischievous cabal is the doctrine of prophetic finality which dictates that the Holy Messenger of Islam (s) is Almighty God's last and final prophet. As we mentioned earlier, Salman Rushdie recently commented that a group of Muslims should strive for internal reform within Islam, but if they fail to do so, then other *Rushdies* like himself will be forced to shoulder this responsibility. Indeed, Rushdie's co-collaborators on the domestic front are busy today, trying to forge critical alterations within Islamic laws. Their aim is to manufacture a new religion for the people; a religion which is, in reality, the very embodiment of secularism and anti-religiousness.

If you ask them today what constitutes the foundational stone and quintessential soul of Islam, they would reply saying, "Freedom, democracy, respect for the people's decisions and an establishment of human rights." In their opinion, Islam's very soul dictates that we allow people to overthrow the constitutional and legal system of our country whenever they feel like it. In other words, Islam's very soul demands that Islam be no more!

An Answer to the Above Criticism

The above criticism is founded upon the existence of apparent differences both within the actions and policies of the Immaculate Imams (as) as well as in the verdicts of Islamic scholars. Similarly, contextual evidence shows

that these differences are a result of two factors: one, changes in historical settings and circumstances, and two, conflicts in personal interpretation. The conclusions drawn from these observations are that we should accept the essential plurality of interpretations, endorsing equal validity for all of them, and that we should recognize the temporary nature of Islamic teachings. Given these admissions, we should immediately do away with all laws and doctrine which have grown obsolete in our times.

In answering this contention we must state that given the absolute infallibility of the Blessed Messenger (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as), and keeping in mind the massive body of research that has taken place over the years, exploring every aspect of the lives of these historical figures, it is utterly clear that these sacred individuals represent one, single, and uniform ideology and that their actions are like the acts of a single proverbial person. The differences that are observable are similar to the varying responses of a single person who, while fully enjoying the rational stability of a single uniform personality, reacts appropriately when faced with conflicting circumstances. As such, these different responses are not symbolic of any shifts in ideology. Similarly, when it comes to changes within laws, it is clear that these changes are not the product of chronological changes or the forward flow of time. Time has nothing to do with it and, thus, it is absolutely inaccurate to claim that these laws are, or were, time-bound in any sense, with certain expiry dates metaphorically stamped to their sides. In fact, all apparent changes within Islamic laws are the direct results of changes within the respective subjects which these laws address. Whenever a certain subject comes into existence,

the law addressing that particular subject automatically comes into effect and becomes enforceable. However, if the subject in question ceases to exist (for instance, through an alteration within one or more of its defining features or the elimination of one or more pre-requisite conditions), the law, too, ceases to be applicable and, thus, is no longer enforceable. Having understood this explanation, we realize that it is even possible for two or more different laws to exist, simultaneously, within one geographical location and during one, single time. Each of these laws will, therefore, address a different subject, even if these subjects may seem similar to a lay-man's naked eye. Likewise, the same situation can exist over two different time periods.

For instance, all the *Fuqahā* unanimously declare that fasting, during the holy month of Ramaḍān, is obligatory upon every Muslim man and woman once he or she has matured to the age of religious responsibility. The same scholars also rule that it is permissible for sick people to forgo such fasting. Some have even proclaimed it impermissible and prohibited in case it poses a threat to the said person's health. These laws are different from one another because they address different subjects. The subject of the first law is a "healthy mature Muslim". The subject of the second is a "sick Muslim". Therefore, the difference between these two laws is not a difference of understanding and interpretation, but a difference rooted in the fact that they address entirely different legal subjects. As we can see, the first law dictates that whenever and where-ever a "healthy mature Muslim" comes into existence, he or she must fast during Ramaḍān. The second edict commands that whenever and where-ever a

"sick Muslim" exists, he or she is allowed to abandon obligatory fasting. This demonstrates that time or place have nothing to do in this case, and that both laws are active and applicable during a single time period and in one geographical location.

Similarly, every mature Muslim is obliged to perform the *Waḍū* (or minor ritual ablution) before praying. Nonetheless, this obligation does not apply to individuals who lack an access to water or for whom water may prove to be hazardous. Instead of doing the *Waḍū*, such people must perform the *Tayammum* (or symbolic dry ablution with sand or other qualified mediums). The difference between these two laws is a direct result of them addressing different subjects. Whenever the subject changes, the applicable law also changes. The subject for the law regarding compulsory *Waḍū* is a "mature Muslim who has access to water," alongside a condition dictating that the usage of water should not be harmful for him or her. On the other hand, the subject for the law regarding *Tayammum* is any "mature Muslim lacking access to water or for whom the use of water may be harmful." In other words, the obligation to perform *Waḍū* constitutes a law applicable only under normal circumstances on healthy people who have ready access to water. Within Islamic jurisprudence, such a law is technically termed *Ḥukm-i Ikhtiyārī*. In contrast, the obligation to do *Tayammum* represents a law applicable only under special circumstances wherein people are unable to access or use water. Such a law is called *Ḥukm-i Iḍṭarārī*. Sometimes laws known as *Ḥukm-i Ikhtiyārī* are also classified as *Ḥukm-i Awwalī* (or primary law), whereas those called

Ḥukm-i Iḍṭarārī are also classified as *Ḥukm-i Thānawī* (or secondary law).

Exploring this subject further, we realize that there exists another terminology wherein the phrase *Ḥukm-i Thānawī* signifies any law constituted under emergency circumstances without there being any explicit mention of it in the Holy Qurān or the narrated traditions. Obviously, this does not mean that such laws are arbitrary and extra-canonical, since the legitimacy of framing them is in fact endorsed explicitly within these two sources of Islamic law. However, the scope and jurisdiction of these laws can sometimes become so wide that they effectively supersede other laws addressing particular subjects directly. For instance, the meat of a sheep slaughtered in the prescribed Islamic manner is *Ḥalāl* (or permissible for human consumption). On the other hand, the meat of a sheep usurped from its rightful owner before being slaughtered is *Ḥarām* (or prohibited for consumption). Thus, the same meat, taken from the same sheep, is both *Ḥalāl* and *Ḥarām*. It is *Ḥalāl* in terms of it having been slaughtered properly, while it is *Ḥarām* because it represents an instance of usurpation. Therefore, being *Ḥalāl* is a ruling that applies to the said meat when viewed simply as meat i.e. its primary and essential title. While being *Ḥarām* is a verdict that superimposes itself on the previous, primary ruling simply because of the meat in question is also an instance of usurped property. This second status causes our meat to gain a secondary or accidental title. In reality, *Ḥukm-i Awwalī* signifies the law or ruling that applies to a subject based upon its primary or essential title, whereas *Ḥukm-i Thānwī* means a law or verdict that applies to the

same subject but due to a secondary, acquired or accidental title.

In conclusion, differences in laws do not indicate the existence of different, although parallel, interpretations of Islam. Instead, they are actually rooted in differences that occur within the subjects they address. From the very start, God Almighty framed separate laws for all separate subjects and whenever a subject changed, heralding in a new subject in its wake, the law applicable to the old subject also disappeared, allowing another law matching the new subject to come in as replacement. When we see that a certain person is deemed *Wājid al-Mā* (in possession of water) at a particular point in time, thus making it compulsory for him to perform *Waḍū* (minor ablution) before praying, yet that the same person is declared *Fāqid al-Mā* (deprived of water) at another time, thus allowing him to perform *Tayammum* (symbolic ablution) instead of *Waḍū*, this apparent change in rulings regarding one single individual is not because religion itself has somehow miraculously undergone internal metamorphosis. The only this that has taken place is a change in subjects.

Another type of change that sometimes occurs within laws is change caused by *Ḥukm-i Ḥukūmatī* (governmental laws) or *Ḥukm-i Wilāyī* (laws enacted by the imam or guardian jurist). The late Imam Khumaynī (ra) explained this idea in one of his lectures. He said, "If an Islamic ruler tells me to give him my robes in order to safeguard some greater interest pertaining to Islam, doing what he asks becomes obligatory upon me, even though these robes are my property and nobody can take or use them without my permission. This authority and prerogative of the Islamic ruler is, in itself, an instance of *Ḥukm-i Awwalī*, whereas

the individual directives issued by him using this authority are similar to instances of *Ḥukm-i Thānawī*. This is because they apply to and are enforceable upon their respective subjects because these subjects, apart from having essential and primary titles, also have acquired and secondary ones which the law in question addresses. On the other hand, the *Ḥukm-i Ḥukūmatī* also resembles the *Ḥukm-i Awwalī* since it is not limited to emergency situations, and does not come into effect only when conditions related to another obligatory law are left unsatisfied.

The Role of Human Greater Interest in Legislation and Framing of Laws

One of the rights enshrined within the Holy Qurān for the Prophet of Islam (s) is the "right to obedience". God says:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى ٱلۡأَمۡرِ مِنكُمۡ﴾

"O' you who have faith, Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you."[1]

Surely, when God Almighty orders us to obey the Holy Prophet (s) in the above mentioned verse, He does not mean us to merely obey him in things already mentioned in the Holy Qurān. Obeying commandments already mentioned therein represents obedience to Almighty God Himself, something stated quite separately in the above verse, while failing to represent a separate and distinct obedience of the Holy Prophet (s) as well. In fact, obedience to the Holy Prophet (s) pertains to us following

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 59.

all instructions, directives and laws issued by him and not mentioned within Qurānic text. The late 'Allāmah Tabāṭabāī (ra), while elaborating upon the meanings of this verse in his celebrated exegesis of the Holy Qurān, writes, "It is beyond any doubt that when God Almighty commands us to obey Him, He intends nothing else other than the laws, teachings and directives issued by Him and revealed to us via prophetic *Waḥī*. However, (as for) His Prophet (s) there exist two dimensions. One dimension of the Prophet's (s) role revolves around his teaching us things that have not been revealed within the Holy Qurān. As such, he bears the responsibility of explaining the many details related to all the laws and teachings mentioned within the Qurān with brevity. The second dimension of the Prophet's (s) role involves his status as ruler and final judicial authority within Muslim society. In this capacity, he is responsible for taking correct decisions in all matters of concern. Keeping these two dimensions in mind, we realize that the phrase '…*obey the Apostle*…' signifies a meaning that is completely independent of the one being conveyed to us by the phrase '…*Obey Allah*…'."[1]

If God Almighty has granted the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as) the authority to issue laws, and they exercise this authority by issuing various commandments within a host of different circumstances, their actions in this regard do not represent any differences in ideological opinions and interpretations of Islam. Similarly, it is simply inaccurate to say that the apparent dissimilarities between their various directives were due to

1 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī, *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, volume 4, pg. 377.

them being issued at different times. Instead, all primary laws (*Aḥkām-i Awwalīyah*) issued by them, along with all their other activities, represented the changes which occurred within the subjects addressed by these laws and actions. For instance, when Imam 'Alī (as) chose to remain silent after the Holy Prophet's (s) demise, staying away from his rightful position in government for twenty five years, he did so based on the greater interests which demanded such a position from him. However, his estrangement from power did not mean that he abandoned his responsibilities. Even within these years he continuously defended Islam, propagated its tenets and teachings, revived its ideals and protected the rights of common people. As such, if the Holy Prophet (s) had been alive during that time, or, if Imam Ḥasan (as), or any one of the other Imams, they too would have acted in the same manner. Therefore, the apparent differences we see in the policies and tactics of the Immaculates (as) are actually manifestations of the application of different laws, each suited for a particular type and form of subject. As these subjects change, through any qualified alteration in circumstances, the laws that relate also change, with one being replaced (but not annulled or repealed) by another (that already existed). In this way, we come to appreciate that factors such as the proposed plurality of interpretations, the purported annulment of older laws and the alleged provisional nature of all Islamic laws and teachings have absolutely nothing to do with this affair.

In consequence, laws and practices observable within the words and lives of the Immaculates (as) were all based on a single, immutable understanding of Islam, which was applied to different situations and subjects in ways that

were appropriate for those circumstances. Each of these individual subjects is characterized by its own individual features, and carries conditions which define it as an instance completely diverse from all others. The qualified *Faqīh*, who enjoys a comprehensive grasp of all aspects of Islamic law and doctrine, can easily identify these features and, therefore, understand which laws apply to which circumstances. For instance, such an Islamic scholar can readily analyze Imam 'Alī's (as) life and ascertain the particular elements that characterized the unique circumstances which led the Imam (as) to act as he did. Once identified, this intricate matrix of individual features and conditions that collectively make up a distinct phenomenon will, in fact, constitute a unique generic legal subject addressed by a particular immutable and permanent Islam law, which in our case is Imam 'Alī's (as) particular stand within the said historical period. As such, whenever and where-ever, throughout Islamic history, we see this individual subject recurring we will also find the particular law that addresses it recurring alongside it, without fail. As a result, it should become clear that Islamic laws, in themselves, are immutable and permanent legal entities. The only change that occurs is that in the real world subjects addressed by these laws come and go. As long as a subject remains present, the law addressing it remains enforced, and as soon as it goes away, being replaced by a subsequent subject, a law addressing this subsequent subject becomes applicable and is enforced. Time, imaginary expiry dates and pluralism have nothing to do with this system. Each immutable law is designed and enacted by God Almighty for a particular and unique subject and these two can never be separated. For instance, when Almighty God framed the laws governing *Ṣalāt*

(Muslim ritual prayer) He decreed that the obligation of a traveler will be different from that of a person not travelling. Thus, someone currently in his own home-town must pray four *Rak'ah* during *Ẓuhr* (noon-time) prayers, while the same prayer is to be performed with only two *Rak'ah* by a person currently on the road travelling. These two separate laws each address a separate and distinct subject. The subject for the first law is a person "present in his own home-town", whereas the subject of the second is a person "currently travelling".

Consequently, all three theories regarding the alleged, and "unresolvable", disparities within the Immaculates' (as) actions and strategies stand completely debunked. Neither are Islamic laws time-bound or provisional, nor is there any interpretational plurality amongst the Immaculates (as) and their understandings of Islam, nor is there any disagreement or inconsistency within their application of Islamic laws. Similarly, the argument built to prove that the Immaculates (as) were not infallible also collapses under scrutiny. All these baseless theories are totally refuted when we realize that all Islamic laws are permanent and immutable, each of them divinely enacted and designed to address a unique and singular subject; a subject meticulously defined in Almighty God's knowledge, even before its creation, and revealed whenever necessary, alongside its relevant law, to His chosen apostles. Thus, as we noted before, the only change that occurs in the real world is a coming and going of subjects, each addressed by a separate and unique law. As long as a subject remains present, the law addressing it remains applied and enforced, and as soon as it goes away, being replaced by a subsequent subject, a law addressing

this subsequent subject becomes currently applicable and is enforced, while the previous law remains valid but in abeyance, awaiting a recurrence of the earlier subject.

Furthermore, a multiplicity of laws, each addressing a unique and accurately defined subject, strengthens any given legal system. The beauty and perfection of Islamic law is that its laws are completely custom designed and appropriate for each and every possible situation. For a healthy mature Muslim, it decrees *Waḍū* as compulsory before prayer, whereas, for a person who does not have access to water or is too ill to use it, it decrees that *Tayammum* be performed instead. If one law was applied to both scenarios, people lacking an access to water, as well as those who are exceedingly ill, would both find themselves forced to choose between two extreme options: abandon prayer all together or pray with great difficulty after somehow performing *Waḍū*. Likewise, in laws related to obligatory fasting, Islamic law differentiated between mature healthy Muslims and those suffering from severe health problems. For the first of these two subjects Islamic law declares that fasting is compulsory during the month of Ramaḍān, while declaring the exact opposite to be true with reference to the latter of these subjects. If a single law were applied to both these cases, sick individuals would end up sicker still, or even dead, after having to perform obligatory fasting. In the same way, sometimes social, political or even regional factors can come into play creating new and unique subjects. Therefore, the various laws issued by the Immaculates (as) during their lifetimes, and the practices and tactics they engaged in, were all manifestations of them applying appropriate instances of immutable and permanent laws to

ever changing subjects in their environment. To summarize, divine laws are all unique, absolute and non-provisional, each addressing a separate and unique legal subject. Whenever a particular subject achieves realization in the real world, the appropriate law that is exclusively designed to address it will automatically become active and applicable. As subjects change, one after the other, some recurring while others do not, laws designed specifically for those subjects become applicable respectively.

In a similar fashion, an Islamic ruler has the authority to issue certain laws in order to preserve greater social and Islamic interests. As such, he can act within the parameter of his authority to prohibit things which are normally permissible, or permit things that are normal prohibited, or even decree certain acts to be obligatory. A historical example is the renowned edict against tobacco issued by the late Islamic scholar, Mirzā Shīrāzī (ra). This edict was, in fact, a *Ḥukm-i Ḥukūmatī* (governmental or administrative decree) issued for the protection of Muslim interests.

If enemies threaten the territorial integrity of an Islamic State, an Islamic ruler has the power to declare it obligatory upon all able bodied Muslims to defend their country. If this happens, it would become a religious duty for all qualified Muslims to respond immediately. Likewise, in a time like today, when blood thirsty enemies such as the United States and the Zionist entity occupying Palestine openly threaten Muslim lives and interests, an Islamic Ruler can ban the purchase and usage of all goods produced and sold by these foreign entities, as well as any sort of exports to them. Certainly, if such a ban, which

complies fully with greater Islamic and Muslim interests, were to be enforced and observed by all Muslim countries, especially those who produce oil, the subsequent embargo would bring these criminal regimes their knees within days. Just as the late Imam Khumaynī (ra) rightly said, "If each Muslim were to pour a single bucket of water on Israel, Israel would be washed away." This statement shows that there exists great and incomparable potential, as well as an unrivalled amount of untapped power within the Muslim masses if they unite under the banner of the Holy Qurān. Such unity could easily wipe out all traces of imperialist and hegemonistic arrogance from the face of the world but, unfortunately, fear and a deep seated lack of self-confidence amongst today's westoxicated Muslim leaders, who are paralyzed by the very thought of losing their lives and riches, impedes and obstructs the creation of any such united front against Islam's enemies.

Laws issued by the *Walī al-Faqīh* (guardian jurisprudent) or Islamic ruler are very similar to the ones issued by an Immaculate Imam himself. As we have already said, the apparent differences amongst the verdicts of the Immaculate Imams (as) are rooted in changes that occur within the situations which these verdicts address. They are not symbolic of any form of multiplicity within their individual interpretations of Islam, nor are they representative to any change within Islamic law and principles. In truth, each law addresses a separate subject (which, in turn, may itself be a simple object or a complex socio-political scenario) and every time a particular subject recurs within the real world, the immutable law attached to it will also recur. This is because it is utterly impossible for any other law to replace it within the said

situation. Therefore, any sort of change with Islamic law or doctrine is unacceptable. When an Islamic ruler issues a decree prohibiting something, or declaring it to be obligatory, he does so while acting completely within the powers bestowed upon him by Islam. As such, his acts do not qualify as a change within Islam and cannot be described as so. When the late Mirzā Shīrāzī (ra) issued his well-known verdict banning the use, sale and purchase of tobacco, he famously wrote, "Today, the use of tobacco is equal to waging war against the Imam of our Age (as)." He issued this edict amidst conditions wherein British colonists were conspiring to fully take over the economy of our Islamic society. Such an economic invasion ran completely contrary to Islamic independence. In reality, this great scholar issued his verdict in compliance with the following Qurānic verse:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمۡ فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمۡ فَتۡحٞ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ قَالُوٓاْ أَلَمۡ نَكُن مَّعَكُمۡ وَإِن كَانَ لِلۡكَٰفِرِينَ نَصِيبٞ قَالُوٓاْ أَلَمۡ نَسۡتَحۡوِذۡ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَنَمۡنَعۡكُم مِّنَ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَۚ فَٱللَّهُ يَحۡكُمُ بَيۡنَكُمۡ يَوۡمَ ٱلۡقِيَٰمَةِۗ وَلَن يَجۡعَلَ ٱللَّهُ لِلۡكَٰفِرِينَ عَلَى ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ سَبِيلٗا ﴾

"…and Allah will never provide the faithless any way [to prevail] over the faithful."[1]

Fair and equitable cooperation and trade is necessary amongst countries. It is inevitable for countries to trade with other countries in order to meet their own

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 141.

requirements for goods and services. However, such trade ties are only useful if they occur while guaranteeing an Islamic country's independence. If, on the other hand, they lead to a colonial takeover of an Islamic nation's economy, then an Islamic ruler has the right to prohibit all such commercial activities. In fact, he is authorized to do so even if the said law harmfully affects the financial interests of the Islamic state in question. This is because **preserving the dignity and independence of an Islamic nation supersedes all other material interests.**

It is important to note that when we speak of an Islamic ruler we mean someone who is either directly appointed as such by the Holy Prophet (s) or the Immaculate Imams (as) through a specific act of sanction, or someone appointed to this office indirectly by the same personalities through a general decree. An example of the first is Mālik al-Ashtar who was specifically and directly appointed by Imam 'Alī (as) as ruler of Egypt during the latter's reign as caliph. In both cases, however, the *Wilāyah* or authority of such a person is divinely sanctioned and bears irrefutable legitimacy. As a result, Muslims are duty-bound to obey him, just as they are duty-bound to obey the Holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imams (as). Similarly, the entire administrative hierarchy under him, along with all its offices, draws its legitimacy and authority from his endorsement of their legal status and powers. Without this legal endorsement by an Islamic ruler, all such officials and governmental bodies would remain utterly illegitimate, lacking jurisdiction. The lawfulness of all these administrative units is, therefore, a result of their appointment by a qualified Islamic ruler who, in turn,

draws his legitimacy from having been appointed, directly or otherwise, by the Immaculate Imams (as) who, finally, receive their own jurisdiction via direct divine appointment by Almighty God Himself. The late Imam Khumaynī (ra) writes, "If a *Faqīh* is not there (as the supreme authority), if a *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is not there (as the ruling system) then all that remains is *Tāghūt* (or tyrannical rebellion against Almighty God) … If the president is not appointed by the *Walī-i Faqīh* (guardian jurisprudent), if he is not recognized through Almighty God's law, then such a president is illegitimate. When he becomes illegitimate, he turns into the *Tāghūt* and obeying him is equal to obeying the *Tāghūt.*"[1] These historical statements of the late Imam (ra) must always remain fresh within the minds of our politicians and officials so that malicious people do not infiltrate our ranks; people who, while hiding under the guise of following the late Imam's (as) path, promote deviant ideas saying that the legitimacy of all governments, and even the *Walī-i Faqīh* (guardian jurist) himself, is rooted in nothing other than the people's popular opinion.

The Reason behind Jurisprudential Differences within the Edicts of the *Marāji'*

The *Fuqahā* or ***Marāji'*** (qualified Islamic scholars and experts of Islamic jurisprudence) are not infallible, nor do they have access to Almighty God's limitless knowledge of absolute truths. As such, the only path available to them for understanding and deriving Almighty God's laws is to diligently study the source texts of Islamic jurisprudence,

1 *Ṣaḥīfah-i Nūr*, volume 9, pg. 253.

analyze them thoroughly, and arrive at a decision which constitutes their edict in any matters of religious significance. Sometimes their respective researches lead to different findings, and this reflects in their individual verdicts. This is why the difference of opinion that sometimes exists between them in jurisprudential issues is considered to be a completely natural academic fact that no one denies. We must know that a certain portion of jurisprudential source texts consist of materials that are indisputable in the veracity of their narration and clarity of connotation. When faced with such explicit source material, all the qualified *Fuqahā* derive the same results with no disagreements. The entire body of such absolute edicts forms the necessary legal doctrines of Islamic law. On the other hand, a large portion within Islamic jurisprudential sources is made up of materials that are indefinite in authenticity or connotation. When faced with these materials, the studies of individual *Fuqahā* yield varying results.

During this age of occultation, since the *Fuqahā* have no access to an Immaculate Imam (as), they have no choice but to turn to narrated traditions to derive Islamic laws. Referring to these books is marred with difficulties. There exist numerous versions of these source texts, bearing inscriptional and other forms of mistakes. Sometimes accessing historical and original documents is very difficult since such rare books are sensitive to heat, moisture and light. At other times, when such books may be available, reading them can be a daunting task. Many are written in a manner which does not have any diacritic markings, leading to a great deal of misunderstanding. Others are simply undecipherable without the help of

experts reading such scripts. Additionally, even texts printed today using modern methods are not immune to errors. In such conditions how can we expect the *Fuqahā* to derive uniform verdicts?

Even more trouble awaits us while analyzing the chain of narrators attached to individual narrated traditions. In some cases the names of a few of the narrators mentioned are such that several historical figures share the names in question. Amongst them, some are considered trustworthy, while others are dubious, and others, unknown. This leads to a great deal of confusion since we cannot distinguish correctly who the mentioned people truly are. For instance, whenever the title "Ibn Sinān" comes up we find ourselves faced by this very dilemma. "Ibn Sinān" is an appellation used to signify Muhammad ibn Sinān as well as 'Abdullah ibn Sinān. A *Faqīh* has to gather all his intellectual strength in order to resolve these apparent puzzles. In other cases, a *Faqīh* needs to spend countless hours simply trying to figure out whether a particular chain of narrators is authentic or not. In yet other cases a *Faqīh* will languish day after day striving to ascertain whether a particular narrated tradition bears an unbroken chain of narration, or whether its chain has links missing in between.

There also exist major difficulties in correctly understanding the connotations of narrated traditions. Many terms have undergone semantic changes over time, while others are used to mean different things in different circumstances or regions. These issues create sizable grey areas within a *Faqīh*'s comprehension of what an Imam (as) actually intended to say within a particular narrated tradition. In fact, anyone other than the people

originally addressed by the Imam (as) in question would find it difficult to know what the exact connotations and denotations of the said narrated text are. Sometimes a certain word was used in a very limited sense during the Immaculate Imam's (as) time, while the same word has come to adopt a much wider meaning and application today. The opposite is also sometimes accurate, with words shrinking in terms of their semantic significance and connotational implication over time. For instance, within the book Nahj al-Balāghah (which is a compilation of Imam 'Alī's (as) sermons and letters) the word *Taqīyah*, along with its other inflected forms, is used to mean *Taqwā* (or God consciousness). The same word transformed into a jurisprudential term during the era of Imam Ṣādiq (as) and came to signify an act wherein a person "abstains from expressing his true faith when it could result in serious physical or financial harm to himself or his family or dignity is any significant way." Likewise, it sometimes happens that the connotational significance of a certain narrated tradition is known but its context is not clear. For instance, we might not be able to discern whether a certain Imam (as) said what he said under normal circumstances or under the conditions of *Taqīyah,* as defined above. Anyway, given these difficulties, and many more, it is impractical demand that the verdicts of the *Fuqahā* be universally unanimous in all matters.

The differences of opinion that occur amongst the *Fuqahā* are essentially the same as those which prevail amongst scholars within other fields of study. As such, we must act according to the dictates of the intellect and collective rational behavior when faced with this reality and refer to

the most learned experts available to find a way out of these academic disagreements. Thus, the *Fuqahā* unanimously declare that all Muslims must refer to the *A'lam Faqīh* (the foremost expert in Islamic jurisprudence) and follow his judgments. However, it cannot be claimed that the verdicts of the *A'lam Faqīh* are definitely the same as Almighty God's actual rulings with reference to a given subject. Nevertheless, it can be claimed with certainty that they are accurate in a vast majority of cases. This fact is enough to provide all those who emulate him with ample surety and intellectual satisfaction.

The jurisprudential derivation of Islamic laws from their original sources is a strict and systematic process defined by stringent academic standards. A *Faqīh* cannot go beyond these parameters, nor can he transgress the limits prescribed by jurisprudential theory. He cannot arbitrarily express his personal opinion when it comes to jurisprudential issues, nor has he the right to interpret the narrated texts and pieces of evidence based upon his own whims. The differences that sometimes exist between the edicts of various Islamic jurisprudents have nothing to do with time difference. On numerous occasions these differences occur between contemporary jurisprudents, while at other times verdicts issued by Islamic *Fuqahā* living today are the same as the ones issued by scholars many centuries ago. Sometimes, a single *Faqīh* may change his opinion upon a jurisprudential ruling within a short period of time, issuing one ruling upon a particular problem and then shifting it to another based on newly unsurfaced data. Similarly, these differences do not represent amendments within Islam because, firstly, the *Fuqahā* are unanimous with reference to necessary Islamic

doctrines and laws, differing only in issues wherein the evidence is susceptible to doubt, and secondly, because all their jurisprudential efforts take place within the strict academic parameters of Islamic jurisprudential theory, consistently refraining them from indulging in any arbitrary behavior whilst deriving jurisprudential conclusions. Based upon this explanation, one realizes that the scholarly disagreements that exist within Islamic academia are neither new, nor by any means astonishing. What is amazing, on the other hand, is the sheer level of ignorance plaguing those who talk of these differences as if they were presenting some sort of devastating *exposé* of a hidden and mysterious phenomenon.

When any pious and God-conscious *Fuqahā* come up with conflicting verdicts, they are to be considered academically valid. The same is true for scholars in all fields of learning and research. At the same time, the opinions articulated by lay-men, lacking an adequate degree of expertise within a particular area of study, or those expressed by pseudo-scholars posing as experts are universally deemed invalid and worthless within serious academic circles. Someone who has not studied medicine has no right to spread his uneducated views in matters related to this subject, and even if he does, no one would take his words seriously. Likewise, a person who is not an expert in religious sciences, and does not enjoy full proficiency in Islamic jurisprudence, must not engage in issuing edicts fabricated to win over popular opinion or, forged in order to further American hegemonic policies by manufacturing a new Islam opposed to true Islamic principles. In short, people should restrict themselves to

matters wherein they enjoy some degree of academic proficiency.

LECTURE NINE
OPPOSITION OF THE NATION BY SUPPORTERS OF HYPOCRISY AND HERESY

Attaining Truth the Objective to Obey God and His Apostles

In the last couple of years, many dangerous conspiracies were implemented aimed at desensitizing the people vis-à-vis their religious sanctities. These plots targeted religious beliefs and ridiculed Islamic teachings openly. Unfortunately, they even enjoyed support from certain factions and senior officials. The ringleaders of these schemes employed a number of tactics, to spread skepticism about core religious principles and Islamic articles of faith. They were bold enough to question the doctrine of apostolic infallibility (belief that the Immaculates (as) are free from error and sin) and even denied the veracity of the Holy Qurān. These misadventures led them to believe that they had sufficiently eroded the public's sensitivity regarding religion and sacred ideals. As such, they started speaking in the most explicit manner, exposing their despicable intentions while employing an unprecedented level of insolence in their derogation of Islamic beliefs. All righteous Muslims are duty-bound to resist this propaganda onslaught and do their share to avert the harm being caused.

Within the Holy Qurān, obedience to God Almighty and His chosen messengers, as well as their rightfully

appointed heirs, is considered an absolute obligation. The objective for this obedience, from the Qurānic perspective, is to attain truth and salvation from misguidance and deviance. This lofty objective can only be realized through a complete submission to Almighty God's will, and by following the commands of His prophets (as) and other divinely sanctioned religious leaders. This is because God Almighty, in His most supreme entity, is not only the ultimate guide towards truth but is, in fact, Truth itself. He has sent forth His holy Messengers (as) with this truth and righteous guidance so as to lead humanity towards holistic and comprehensive success. Therefore, common sense dictates that all human-beings submit themselves wholeheartedly to obeying God Almighty, and abandon their false servitude to deviant and misguided imposters.

﴿ قُلۡ هَلۡ مِن شُرَكَآئِكُم مَّن يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلۡحَقِّۚ قُلِ ٱللَّهُ يَهۡدِي لِلۡحَقِّۗ أَفَمَن يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلۡحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لَّا يَهِدِّيٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُهۡدَىٰۖ فَمَا لَكُمۡ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُونَ ٣٥ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكۡثَرُهُمۡ إِلَّا ظَنًّاۚ إِنَّ ٱلظَّنَّ لَا يُغۡنِي مِنَ ٱلۡحَقِّ شَيۡـًٔاۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمُۢ بِمَا يَفۡعَلُونَ ﴾

"Say, 'Is there anyone among your partners who may guide to the truth?' Say, 'Allah guides to the truth. Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is not guided unless shown the way? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?' Most of them just

follow conjecture; indeed conjecture is no substitute for the truth. Indeed Allah knows best what they do."[1]

The word *Ḥaq* (or truth) has been used frequently in the Qurānic chapter Yūnus. Just within the two verses given above, the said word is seen to be repeated four times. Similarly, we are told that obeying God leads us to the truth. The above Qurānic verses explain that only God Almighty deserves to be obeyed since He is the Truth and exclusively bears the power to guide others to it. Obviously, only such a perfect entity should merit our obedience, not deficient beings who themselves require guidance. God Almighty invites the untainted intellect and human conscience to sit in judgment over this matter. Certainly, such an intellect and the voice of human morality, which are both naturally drawn towards truth and reality, will rule in favor of obeying God Almighty. In stark contrast, minds polluted by baseless fancies, tenuous whims and speculations and lustful desires, are only expected to lead themselves and others into the dark abyss of corruption.

Another critical point highlighted by the said Qurānic verses is that Almighty God's obedience constitutes a key element within mankind's journey towards guidance and salvation. The fundamental constitution and soul of all divine religions consists of the necessity of obeying God Almighty and following the way of life that He prescribes for humanity. The obedience of Almighty God's prophets (as) and other divinely sanctioned religious authorities is a natural extension of the obligation to obey

1. The Holy Qurān, Yūnus: 35, 36.

Almighty God Himself. Their legitimacy and jurisdiction comes from His endorsement and approval.

﴿ وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِ ﴾

"We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed, by Allah's leave."[1]

In another Qurānic verse, God Almighty points out the logical correlation that exists between these two forms of obedience.

﴿ مَّن يُطِعِ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَقَدۡ أَطَاعَ ٱللَّهَ ﴾

"Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly obeys Allah."[2]

In short, obeying the Almighty's chosen apostles (as) is equivalent to obeying God Almighty Himself. The intellect readily accepts this fact, since it is God Almighty who guided them in the first place, and then sent them forth to lead humanity towards the truth which they themselves recognize with complete certainty.

Infallibility; an Essential Characteristic of God's Messengers (as)

In the Qurānic chapter Al-An'ām, after having named eighteen of His holy apostles, God Almighty goes on to say:

﴿أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ هَدَى ٱللَّهُۖ فَبِهُدَىٰهُمُ ٱقۡتَدِهۡ ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 64.
2. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 80.

"They are the ones whom Allah has guided. So follow their guidance."[1]

In the beginning, God Almighty points out that He guided His messengers (as) towards the truth and His path until they received such knowledge which rendered them certain of its reality. He personally guaranteed their guidance and, therefore, His prophets (as) are not prone to doubts when they go forth to guide others. Given these facts, He commands us to obey them in order to realize true guidance. The Qurānic verse in question indicates prophetic infallibility in all matters related to the reception of divine revelation by Almighty God's apostles, as well as their role in conveying this divinely revealed message to mankind. The belief in such infallibility, divinely endowed upon all sacred prophets (as), forms a necessary part of the core religious principles of all Muslims. The philosophy behind this apostolic immunity to error and sin is elaborated upon in the following Qurānic verses:

﴿ عَـٰلِمُ ٱلۡغَيۡبِ فَلَا يُظۡهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيۡبِهِۦٓ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾ إِلَّا مَنِ ٱرۡتَضَىٰ
مِن رَّسُولٖ فَإِنَّهُۥ يَسۡلُكُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهِۦ رَصَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾
لِّيَعۡلَمَ أَن قَدۡ أَبۡلَغُواْ رِسَـٰلَـٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيۡهِمۡ وَأَحۡصَىٰ
كُلَّ شَيۡءٍ عَدَدَۢا ﴾

"Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] Unseen to anyone, except to an apostle He approves of. Then He dispatches a sentinel

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-An'ām: 90.

before and behind him so that He may ascertain that they have communicated the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses all that is with them, and He keeps account of all things."[1]

However, despite the irrefutability of the said doctrine, a few pseudo-scholars who claim to be practising Muslims, have denied the existence of any such immaculacy. In their view, prophets understand divine revelation just as any other common human-being would and, as a result, are equally susceptible to miscomprehensions and mistakes. These ignorant individuals claim to be cutting-edge theoreticians, writing books, publishing articles and making speeches in which they disseminate such essentially divergent beliefs. Worse still is the fact that they receive active support from certain officials; officials who take great pride in their patronage of such affairs and personalities.

Satan's Leadership and Assistance for Misguided Thinkers

In opposition to Almighty God's prophets (as), whom He has chosen to guide humanity towards truth and blessed with infallibility, there is another group competing for the hearts and minds of human-beings. This group consists of devils and their followers who have no knowledge of the truth and continuously strive to lead mankind astray. God Almighty repeatedly advises all human-beings to steer clear of the machinations of this cabal. He tells them not to follow their ways, which run counter to man's natural inclination towards truth and inevitably lead him to

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Jin: 26-28.

damnation and eternal shame. This faction, wickedly dedicated to leading others away from rightful guidance, is spiritually linked to Satan and hails from within the ranks of his vile cohorts. Satan rules over their hearts and souls, using them as he pleases:

﴿إِنَّمَا سُلۡطَٰنُهُۥ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوۡنَهُۥ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم بِهِۦ مُشۡرِكُونَ ﴾

"His (Satan's) authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner [of Allah]."[1]

Just as God Almighty reveals His blessed message unto His sacred apostles (as), teaching them the truth and showing them how to lead the people towards ultimate guidance, so does Satan communicate with his devoted partisans, filling their subservient hearts with foul inspirations and coaching them in despicable trickeries employed to corrupt human-beings and lead them towards devastation. Furthermore, he provokes his devotees to challenge and fight against all who befriend God and are wayfarers of His sacred path.

﴿وَلَا تَأۡكُلُواْ مِمَّا لَمۡ يُذۡكَرِ ٱسۡمُ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيۡهِ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَفِسۡقٞۗ وَإِنَّ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰٓ أَوۡلِيَآئِهِمۡ لِيُجَٰدِلُوكُمۡۖ وَإِنۡ أَطَعۡتُمُوهُمۡ إِنَّكُمۡ لَمُشۡرِكُونَ ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Naḥl: 100.

"Indeed, the Satans inspire their friends to dispute with you; and if you obey them, you will indeed be polytheists."[1]

Satan secretly instills ideas into the minds of his followers without them being aware of these concepts previously. These thoughts are such that the individuals in question could not have come up with them independently. Once these satanic seeds have been implanted in their thoughts, these people feel as if they have made a great intellectual discovery, finding an argument with which they can attack prophetic schools of thought. They use these doubts and paralogistic fallacies to spread skepticism amongst the believers and weaken their faith and resolve. This is why the Holy Qurān asks all pious believers to remain diligently alert with regards to Satan and his associates, warning them not to socialize with his devious accomplices. This is because Satan's coconspirators are always on the hunt for people with little knowledge and weak ideological footing, which deprives them of the strength needed in order to defend their beliefs against a tirade of devilish doubts and fallacious arguments. Obviously, Satan and his forces would never approach well-informed scholars, who are both well-versed in religious principles, and enjoy totally steadfast convictions. They would never come close to any such honest expert simply because they realize that he is fully capable of debunking their lies with logical answers. As a result, they remain on a lookout for individuals with superficial information and faith, focusing their attention upon mediocre intellects, which are easily ensnared by

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-An'ām: 121.

doubts and suspicions. God Almighty rebukes such people for not listening to His advice when they sit and converse with Satan's emissaries:

﴿وَقَدۡ نَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِي ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ أَنۡ إِذَا سَمِعۡتُمۡ ءَايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ يُكۡفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسۡتَهۡزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقۡعُدُواْ مَعَهُمۡ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُواْ فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيۡرِهِۦٓۚ إِنَّكُمۡ إِذٗا مِّثۡلُهُمۡۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ جَامِعُ ٱلۡمُنَٰفِقِينَ وَٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا﴾

"Certainly He has sent down to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's signs being disbelieved and derided, do not sit with them until they engage in some other discourse, or else you [too] will be like them. Indeed Allah will gather the hypocrites and the faithless in hell, all together."[1]

Deviant Groups Specially Target Youngsters

When a person socializes with hypocrites and deviant thinkers and engages in conversation, his heart slowly gets polluted with hypocrisy even though his outer appearance remains that of a pious believer. Socializing with divergent individuals creates schisms within his religious beliefs and convictions.

If a person wishes to engage with deviant groups and individuals, he must first cement his own ideological foundations with thorough research. Then, he must equip himself with all necessary skills regarding logical argumentation and rhetorical technique. Only then can he hope to effectively counter the paralogistic fallacies of

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Nisā: 140.

such people. A youngster who has not undergone any adequate training in professional wrestling cannot abruptly enter into matches against experienced wrestlers. If he does so, he would just end up being knocked out in the first few seconds. Similarly, someone with only a very basic understanding of religious beliefs and doctrines received only from his father and mother without specialized education, is clearly in no position to face complex arguments and intricate fallacies. If this person finds himself confronted by such complicated doubts, these doubts will undoubtedly leave a deep impression on his impressionable mind.

Hypocrites strive to hoodwink young and gullible individuals. For the sake of spreading their erroneous thoughts they charm young people, with limited information about religious beliefs, by presenting them with such themes as "freedom of thought and speech". They tell them to digest all points of view, but only choose the best from amongst them. We also believe in freedom of thought, but in order to provide grounds for an open analysis of opinions we must first remove all barriers that exist in the path of logical understanding. This means that we must first provide the necessary prerequisites for proper intellectual growth, which is a dialogue between peers and people of equal intellectual standing and aptitude. It does not serve any purpose apart from creating confusion, to pit groups of ill-informed youngsters against a highly-skilled professional arguer. In such a lopsided debate, the devilish mind of a professional charlatan in academic disguise would certainly overwhelm the immature and credulous intellects of the audience, enchanting them with fallacious arguments and, finally,

robbing them of their previous beliefs and convictions. Is it not true that in the past twenty years we have repeatedly invited some of these fraudulent pseudo-intellectuals to come and enter into a serious scholarly debate with us, but they have always avoided such a thing, presenting a multitude of lame excuses every time? They know that if they enter into a debate with recognized Islamic scholars they would definitely face defeat. This is why they spend all their time trying to mislead youngsters instead.

The Utter Necessity of Following the Truth and Abandoning Obsolete Western Ideas

Whom should we follow and emulate? Should we follow Almighty God's prophets (as) who receive their knowledge from God's infinite wisdom and are, therefore, fully aware and conscious of the truth and reality of all existence, calling people towards this truth by their words and deeds day and night? Or should we choose to emulate people who have no knowledge of the truth and whose words are self-contradictory? Is it not common-sense to listen to someone who brings definitive arguments, amazing miracles and crystal clear signs to back up his claims? Someone who shares a common message and mission with a hundred and twenty four thousands divine messengers who have all articulated the same ideas and principles at different times and places throughout human history? Or should we listen instead to someone who cannot even get the beginning of his speech to match the end? Someone who presents his audiences with contradictory and conflicting opinions, and whose views keep changing by the day? When asked why this inconsistency plagues his works, he replies by saying that

yesterday's words were yesterday's words, whereas today's views are today's views, because everything that exists must continuously experience relentless transformation and nothing in the universe remains permanent. Similarly, he adds that man too is undergoing constant change, especially within the sphere of his beliefs and convictions. Some time back, a group of people confronted one of these divergent thinkers, telling him that his views today contradict those he wrote in a book nine years ago. This man, who prides himself for intellectual impermanency, answered that the author of the said book died nine years ago. By this he meant that nine years had passed since he abandoned his previous beliefs.

The logic presented by Almighty God's prophets (as) is that their teachings and beliefs, and Almighty God's chosen path for the salvation of humanity, are all immutable and eternal realities. These realities are completely compatible with human nature and the intellect, and one can easily present intellectual arguments to confirm the authenticity of every one of these ideas. In contrast, the logic presented by divergent thinkers in order to attract people is that their ideas constitute new opinions, whereas all competing ideas are old and worn out. Similarly, they claim that their views are accepted by a majority of people within the modern world, while enjoying the acknowledgment of science and industry. One must ask, is majority public opinion a correct measure for establishing objective truth? Let us gauge this logic against what God Almighty says in the following Qurānic verse:

﴿ وَإِن تُطِعۡ أَكۡثَرَ مَن فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِۚ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا ٱلظَّنَّ وَإِنۡ هُمۡ إِلَّا يَخۡرُصُونَ ﴾

"If you obey most of those on the earth, they will lead you astray from the way of Allah. They follow nothing but conjecture and they do nothing but surmise."[1]

God Almighty tells us not to follow majority opinion since the majority do not think rationally, rely mostly on speculation rather than certitude, and because they are usually not equipped with adequate levels of knowledge needed to determine "truth" from "falsehood" objectively. Popular views are seldom based on intellectual proof. They are founded, instead, upon mere conjectures, unconfirmed assumptions, base desires and personal fancies. Those who desire the truth must find people who already know it so that they may follow their guidance. However, if we follow someone who is a slave to his lustful desires, lacking any correct rationale for his actions, then this person will surely lead us astray. It is intellectually unacceptable to deem things like majority opinion and the "freshness" of ideas as a yardstick to determine truth. Interestingly, notions being touted as "novel" and "fresh" are neither novel nor fresh. These baseless and readily refutable concepts have been around for centuries, but are being sold today as instances of "original thinking" by swindlers who conceal the actual decayed product behind a façade of attractive words and expressions. The essential soul of all these ideas is sophist skepticism, a school of philosophical thought that goes

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-An'ām: 116.

back to a period pre-dating Socrates. The inherent nature of these ancient theories is that they promote self-indulgent subservience to lustful desires, while negating the existence and possibility of certain knowledge, and propagating the need to make conjectures and estimations the sole criterion behind human decision making. Keeping this in mind, how is it that these so-called illuminated thinkers devote themselves to the very mother of all obsolete ideologies while proclaiming that they exclusively champion the cause of original thinking and scientific development?

Scientific and academic advancement happens by discovering previously unknown truths, furthering the boundaries of human knowledge and awareness through diligent and enthusiastic research. It certainly does not transpire through resuscitating, albeit in new and fancy apparels, the oldest form of intellectual nihilism which does nothing but rejuvenate utter ignorance by negating the very possibility of knowing anything. Are the words of today's Positivists, who claim that the only way to know reality is to prove it through physical experimentation, representative of fresh and original ideas? Interestingly, the same pattern of thinking was prevalent amongst the Banī Isrāyīl (the Israelites) when they addressed Mūsā (as) in the following manner:

﴿وَإِذۡ قُلۡتُمۡ يَٰمُوسَىٰ لَن نُّؤۡمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى ٱللَّهَ جَهۡرَةً فَأَخَذَتۡكُمُ ٱلصَّٰعِقَةُ وَأَنتُمۡ تَنظُرُونَ ﴾

"And when you (the Banī Isrāyīl) said, 'O Moses, we will not believe you until we see Allah visibly.' Thereupon a thunderbolt seized you as you looked on."[1]

This aside, how can "freshness" or "novelty" per se ever be deemed a standard for gauging the correctness of any given idea? Many new and innovative theories are presented only to be debunked as inaccurate and erroneous. A proposition can only be considered true if there exists foolproof intellectual reasoning to back it up (reasoning that relies on concepts which are self-evident and absolute in nature) or if there exists divinely revealed evidence corroborating its veracity. Obviously, given Almighty God's infinite and unparalleled knowledge of all that exists, His approval of any given idea would instantly translate its being true.

Therefore, two separate roads lie before all human-beings. One of them is Almighty God's highway, while the other belongs to Satan's. God Almighty wants us to obey Him and follow His path, a path pointed out to us by His sacred prophets (as), their rightful heirs (as) and all divinely sanctioned guides who strive to lead people towards salvation. If we walk upon this road, our journey would be in compliance with the truth and compatible to the demands of our essential human nature, leading us to holistic and comprehensive success. At the same time, God Almighty tells us not to follow Satan and his devilish ensemble, simply because their path represents total corruption and leads only to Hell-fire.

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1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Baqarah: 55.

The Holy Qurān and Lessons from the Battle of *Aḥzāb* (Many Factions)

We indirectly understand the status of the Holy Prophet (s) as mankind's ultimate role-model from the numerous Qurānic verses that speak of the compulsory nature of obeying him (s). Apart from these verses, there also exist certain other sections of the Holy Qurān wherein the Sacred Messenger's (s) status as role-model is explicitly mentioned.

﴿ لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِى رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلْيَوْمَ ٱلْأَخِرَ وَذَكَرَ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴾

"There is certainly a good exemplar (role-model) for you in the Apostle of Allah - for those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day, and remember Allah much."[1]

Exegetes believe that the Qurānic chapter Al-Aḥzāb was revealed in the aftermath of the battle of Uhud and during the events surrounding the Battle of Aḥzāb. The Battle of Uhud resulted in an apparent defeat for the Muslims, leaving them with many losses. In this confrontation, many of the Holy Prophet's (s) pious companions were either injured or martyred, his (s) own teeth were broken and Amīr al-Muminīn 'Alī (as) received countless wounds. This military setback emboldened the hypocrites who had hidden themselves amongst Muslim ranks. They started renewed efforts to weaken the Muslim resolve, hatching fresh conspiracies against Islam, its ideals and the Holy Prophet (s) himself. The ultimate objective of these

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Aḥzāb: 21.

schemes was to erode Muslim self-confidence, render them totally disillusioned and hopeless, and thus, lead to Islam's complete and final collapse. On the other side, the polytheists, who fancied themselves as the victors of Uhud, prepared themselves for striking another decisive blow that would eliminate Islam forever. Given such circumstances, the Jews also decided to openly side with Islam's enemies. They blatantly ignored the treaties they had signed with the Holy Prophet (s) and went on to join the ranks of his adversaries. This was how the troika against Islam, consisting of an alliance between the polytheists, Jews and internal hypocrites, came into being.

a) Peace -Offer by the Polytheists and Hypocrites after the Battle of Uhud

After the tragic results of the Battle of Uhud, the polytheists believed that the Muslims' had lost their resolve for resistance and war. They estimated that the Muslims' would enthusiastically concede to any proposal for peace and compromise. As such, they sent three of their leaders, Abū Sufyān, 'Ikramah ibn Abī Jahl and Abū al-A'war Salmā, to Madinah as their emissaries. Within Madinah, they were housed by the chief of the city's hypocrites, 'Abdullah ibn Ubay, who approached the Holy Prophet (s) on their behalf and, thus, won for them a temporary amnesty. Consequently, he and his guests, alongside two other hypocrites named 'Abdullah ibn Sa'eed ibn Abī Suraḥ and Ṭu'mah ibn Ubayraq, went to see the Holy Prophet (s). Once in the Messenger's (s) presence, they said, "Up until now there has only been war amongst us that has caused us great losses in terms of lives and property. We have come here to set aside this enmity,

cease hostility, to co-exist with one another under the umbrella of peace and compromise. However, the condition attached to this offer is that you cease opposing our gods, *Lāt*, *'Uzzā* and *Manāt* (three of Makkah's chief idols) and end your crusade against polytheism. We, in return, will halt all antagonism against Islam's beliefs and forsake our animosity vis-à-vis the Muslims. All we want is to live in peace, be friends, to visit one another, engage in mutual trade and effectively ignore each other's beliefs, so that everyone can act according to whatever religion they want." The Holy Prophet (s) rejected this proposal with finality.

As one can clearly see, the logic behind the polytheists' offer was the same ideology of so-called *tolerance* that is so eagerly preached today. This ideology invites people to unconditionally accept and respect the beliefs of all other people, even if such beliefs and convictions may actually be harmful. Based on this pattern of thinking, no one has the right to resist another person's insolence against sacred doctrines. One may not challenge the onslaught of anti-religious ideas, resist attacks against core values or show sensitivity towards the propagation of fallacious concepts and social vices. Instead, one must accept and tolerate all such behavior, deeming it the inalienable right of other human-beings.

The polytheists wanted to create a lenient atmosphere so as to achieve their own ulterior goals. Their offer was not meant to further Muslim interests or secure the rights of Muslim masses. They knew that if they could convince the Holy Prophet (s) to agree to their terms, the ensuing environment of so-called tolerance and armistice would give them the chance to infiltrate Muslim ranks, spread

doubts amongst the faint-hearted believers, and eventually provide the groundwork for Islam's total downfall. This is why God said the following in His Holy Book:

﴿ فَلَا تُطِعِ ٱلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ ۝٨ وَدُّواْ لَوۡ تُدۡهِنُ فَيُدۡهِنُونَ ﴾

"So do not obey the deniers, who are eager that you should be flexible, so that they [too] may be flexible [towards you]."[1]

Similarly, the hypocrites who were apparently Muslims and performed all the Islamic rituals and religious obligations, while maintaining good ties with the polytheists, supported the idea of a ceasefire and peace accord because they believed this to be in the Muslim community's greater interests. They believed that with the enemies gathering at Islam's doorsteps, and the Jews and the polytheists united under one banner, it was only a matter of time before the Muslims were overrun by their nemesis. They argued that if the Muslim community were to refrain from forging ties with factions within its enemies' camp, and if it continued to antagonize its opponents, the sheer numbers and logistic superiority of the adversary would become the Muslims' final undoing. However, God Almighty stopped His Messenger (s) from paying heed to their words.

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ ٱتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ وَٱلۡمُنَٰفِقِينَۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Qalam: 8,9.

"O' Prophet, Be wary of Allah and do not obey the faithless and the hypocrites. Indeed Allah is All-knowing, All-wise."[1]

b) Conspiracies of the Hypocrites During the Battle of Khandaq/ Aḥzāb and the Eventual Muslim Victory

Once the Blessed Messenger (s) turned down the joint hypocrite-polytheist offer, having received word from God Almighty to stand steadfast in his resistance to their attacks, the polytheists decided to gather all their forces and strike a final and decisive military blow designed to extinguish the Islamic threat once and for all. Fueled by their deep-seated hatred of Islam, and angered by the loss of many of their compatriots in past battles against the Muslims, the polytheists of Makkah contacted all the other Arab tribes inviting them to form a grand military alliance. Likewise, they approached the Jewish tribes who populated the areas surrounding Madinah; tribes known for their ample financial resources, strong impenetrable forts and superior technology. As such, a grand desert armada was put together in order to bring the Muslims to their knees.

This vast army, consisting of the most skilled Jewish and Arab warriors, moved towards Madinah. The Holy Prophet (s) responded by rallying his own forces, preparing the people for effective resistance against all attacks. In order to draft out an adequate defense strategy, the Sacred Messenger (s) sat in counsel with his companions and finally Salmān Fārsī's suggestion was approved. Salmān had previously seen that in Iran ditches

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Aḥzāb: 1.

would be dug around cities in order to protect them against enemy onslaughts. He suggested that the same be done to defend Madinah against all penetration.

Muslims faced great hurdles in their efforts to dig such a trench. They suffered from starvation while working in the heat of day due to a lack of food, brought on by the enemy's embargo, and were even forced to tie stones around their bellies to reduce the hunger. As they toiled hard, all day long, many would collapse from malnutrition and the scorching heat but the Prophet of God (s) would keep encouraging them, urging them to continue and promising them victory over their foes. He (s) would boost their spirits by telling them of successes to come in the future. He (s) prophesied that after winning this current battle, they would go on to conquer the entire Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian and Roman empires as well. The hypocrites would listen to these words of the Sacred Apostle (s) only to ridicule them. They would glance at one another saying, "These people cannot even fill their own bellies, yet they speak of conquering Persia and Rome."

Furthermore, the hypocrites spread fear amongst the Muslim population. They would tell people that if the united Arab army attacks their city, it would surely be turned upside down and nothing would remain of their lives, homes and families. The faint-hearted and weak of faith would find themselves swayed by these words, becoming paralyzed by dread. However, the true believers were not influenced by these terrible predictions of doom. They kept their spirits high and prepared themselves for comprehensive resistance. In fact, when they saw the colossal Arab army approaching Madinah, with its

countless soldiers and advanced weapons, they felt no distress. Bravely, and with complete composure, they remarked that the Holy Prophet's (s) promises were coming true one after the other, and that victory was surely near. Not only were they not frightened, but indeed their faith and determination grew tenfold, becoming even more resilient in their obedience to God Almighty. As such, they armed themselves for battle, ready to dutifully do or die in defense of their faith. God praised their firm faith and unshakable resolve in the following Qurānic verse:

﴿وَلَمَّا رَءَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ٱلْأَحْزَابَ قَالُواْ هَـٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥ وَصَدَقَ ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥ ۚ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّآ إِيمَـٰنًا وَتَسْلِيمًا ﴾

"But when the faithful saw the confederates, they said, 'This is what Allah and His Apostle had promised us, and Allah and His Apostle were true.' And it only increased them in faith and submission."[1]

In the end, the Arab allied forces reached Madinah but were prevented from attacking the city by the trench that lay in their path. As a result, they were forced to camp outside the city, laying siege to it for twenty days without any progress. The Arab leaders complained, "It is shameful for us to sit here and do nothing. We must find a way to attack the Muslims!" Finally, they sent an expedition, headed by the renowned warrior, 'Amr ibn 'Abduwad, to cross the trench and assault the Muslim lines. The expedition did manage to cross the defensive

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Aḥzāb: 22.

structure but their leader was struck down by 'Alī (as) and thus, the venture ended in failure. With their champion killed and their forces languishing in the dry desert outside Madinah, the enemy lost all its morale and decided to retreat in defeat. This is how the Battle of *Aḥzāb* (many factions), or the Battle of *Khandaq* (the trench), as it is also called, resulted in victory for the Muslims.

c) Almighty God's Proclamation of the Holy Prophet (s) as Role-Model for Mankind

Since the Sacred Messenger (s) turned down all proposals of compromise presented to him by the polytheists, stood firm against the demands of the hypocrites, and displayed absolute determination for preserving the truth when faced by naked hostility from the united enemies of Islam (determination that eventually led to the Muslims' final victory), God Almighty revealed unto him verse 21 of the Qurānic chapter Al-Aḥzāb which praises him and his actions. Within this Qurānic verse, which was also mentioned earlier in our discussion, God Almighty proclaims Muhammad (s) to be the perfect role-model for humanity. Additionally, He mentions three traits that characterize all people who truly follow and emulate the Blessed Messenger (s). These traits are:-

1.- **Having Trust and Faith in God Almighty:** When a person has unflinching trust in Almighty God and puts his faith exclusively in God's infinite knowledge, wisdom and power, totally ignoring everything else, this absolute trust and faith will equip him to be firm and steadfast during his performance of all divinely ascribed duties. As such, nothing will ever influence his determination to achieve his sacred goals.

2.- **Trust in the Hereafter:** When a person truly believes in the Hereafter, considering it to be mankind's eternal abode, he does not allow himself to be swayed by base desires. He resists all satanic temptations, steering clear of transgression in order to achieve ultimate salvation. Similarly, this trust in the Day of Final Judgment, leads him to be diligent in performing his duties to God Almighty, whereby he strives to attain Almighty God's spiritual proximity. On the other hand, when such a person sees true life to be the one that exists in the Hereafter, he suffers no fear in this world and struggles in Almighty God's path relentlessly even if it leads to martyrdom. He fully understands that if he stays upon Almighty God's chosen path then it makes no difference whether he achieves apparent success in this material world or suffers apparent failure. He knows that all outcomes within this temporal plain are of equal value as long as he remains faithful here and secures endless prosperity in the eternal world to come.

3.- **Ample Remembrance of Allah:** When a person remembers God Almighty abundantly, concentrating his attentions upon the Source of all existence, his heart and soul are rendered immune to all spiritual corruption, leaving him in blissful tranquility. Even more importantly, constant remembrance of God Almighty leads us to reorient our thoughts and actions towards meaningful goals, chief amongst them being the attainment of Almighty Allah's spiritual proximity.

Herein we must point out the resemblance that this historical episode in Islam's early history has with our own contemporary situation. If the polytheist army and the Jews laid siege to the fledgling Muslim state back in those

days, international imperialism headed by the Americans besieges our Islamic system today. The Americans are present in many of our neighboring countries in an effort to bring us to our knees. They have official military bases in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iraq and Turkey. From amongst these states, Turkey not only hosts the Americans but is also an ally of the Zionist regime, having entered into a military pact with this criminal entity. However, in the past few years significant changes have taken place within the Turkish political environment. With pro-Islam sentiment spreading amongst the people, political parties with Islamic roots have been able to flex their muscles, winning noticeable success at the ballot box. The Turkish secular establishment, nevertheless, keeps piling up pressure on these parties, banning them from engaging in political activities in an effort to stop them from realizing their goals. However, a few months ago a political party with Islamic inclinations was able to win a decisive victory in this country's general elections, thus becoming the only party in recent Turkish history to form a government on its own, without having to forge a coalition with any other groups. Anyhow, given this state of affairs, we must remain ever vigilant of our enemies' activities so as to avert all conspiracies hatched by our external foes, as well as all internal hypocrites.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as); Role-Model of Resistance against Disbelief and Polytheism

In the Qurānic chapter, *Al-Mumtaḥanah*, we find the term *Uswah* (or role-model) being used to signify the prophet Ibrāhīm (as). This Qurānic chapter provides us with many lessons that we can use today, much like the chapter, *Al-*

Aḥzāb. It carries very important information about how to struggle against the forces of disbelief and hypocrisy, and therefore deserves to be thoroughly reviewed by all students of Islam and those sincerely searching for truth. It should be studied and be deliberated upon alongside its exegesis and all narrated traditions related to it. Right in the beginning of this Qurānic chapter, God tells the believers not to take His enemies as their friends. He warns them that such a friendship would only lead to them being exploited and their trust being misused, as the enemies will deviously trick them in ways that will create serious threats for the Islamic community. Subsequently, He advises the believers to stand firmly in opposition to His enemies, declaring that their resistance will not end until the hegemonic and arrogant designs of their foes are defeated. In the very first verse of this Qurānic chapter, God Almighty says the following:

﴿ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَتَّخِذُواْ عَدُوِّى وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَآءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِٱلْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُواْ بِمَا جَآءَكُم مِّنَ ٱلْحَقِّ يُخْرِجُونَ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۙ أَن تُؤْمِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ رَبِّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَـٰدًا فِى سَبِيلِى وَٱبْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِى ۚ تُسِرُّونَ إِلَيْهِم بِٱلْمَوَدَّةِ وَأَنَا۠ أَعْلَمُ بِمَآ أَخْفَيْتُمْ وَمَآ أَعْلَنتُمْ ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْهُ مِنكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ ٱلسَّبِيلِ ﴾

"O' you who have faith, do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends, [secretly] offering them affection, if you have set out for jihad in My way and to seek My pleasure, for they have certainly denied whatever has

come to you of the truth, expelling the Apostle and you, because you have faith in Allah, your Lord. You secretly nourish affection for them, while I know well whatever you hide and whatever you disclose, and whoever among you does that has certainly strayed from the right way."[1]

In verse four of the same chapter, He says:

﴿ قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَٱلَّذِينَ مَعَهُۥٓ إِذْ قَالُواْ لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءَٰٓؤُاْ مِنكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ ٱلْعَدَٰوَةُ وَٱلْبَغْضَآءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ وَحْدَهُۥٓ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَآ أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ مِن شَىْءٍ ۖ رَّبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴾

"There is certainly a good exemplar for you in Abraham and those who were with him, when they said to their own people, 'Indeed we repudiate you and whatever you worship besides Allah. We disown you, and enmity and hate have appeared between you and us forever, unless you come to have faith in Allah alone,' apart from Abraham's saying to his father, 'I will surely plead forgiveness for you, though I cannot avail you anything against Allah.' 'Our Lord, in You do we put our trust, and to You do we turn penitently, and toward You is the destination."[2]

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1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Mumtaḥanah: 1.
2. The Holy Qurān, Al-Mumtaḥanah: 4.

Ibrāhīm (as) and his small band of faithful followers courageously opposed the tyrannical Nimrūd and his polytheistic people. Their unwavering determination and faith, despite their meager numbers, won them the status of being proclaimed as role-models for all believers everywhere. In that era, the monarch Nimrūd ruled over a wealthy, powerful and expansive kingdom with present-day Iraq forming only a portion of his territory. His was an advanced kingdom with countless resources and plentiful population. However, Ibrāhīm (as) was not one to be intimidated by such things. He and his followers rose up against Nimrūd with total resolve, such that all the king's legendary riches, dictatorial authority, cutting-edge technology and his innumerable subjects were not able to force Ibrāhīm (as) into a compromise. We must learn from this example and by following it, firmly reject the words of all those who encourage us to act with negligence in reference to the enemy. We must emulate Ibrāhīm (as) and his followers and, thus, struggle restlessly against anti-religious propaganda, fighting disbelief and heresy in all its forms. We must not be scared since we have God to support us, and if we remain steadfast and faithful, then His help will surely reach us.

When Ibrāhīm (as) advised his paternal uncle and guardian, Āzar, he would not listen to him, ignoring his repeated arguments and rejecting his advice, Ibrāhīm (as) asked God Almighty to forgive him his trespasses. He did this because he still believed that Āzar could be led to the truth and because the latter had been kind to him as his guardian. However, when Ibrāhīm (as) finally realized that Āzar was not willing to give up his prejudicial stand, clinging to ignorance and disbelief with all his strength, he

gave up all hope for his uncle's guidance and expressed alienation with regards to him. God Almighty speaks of this affair as such:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ ٱسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَن مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَآ إِيَّاهُ

فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُۥٓ أَنَّهُۥ عَدُوٌّ لِّلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لَأَوَّٰهٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴾

"Abraham's pleading forgiveness for his father (paternal uncle) was only to fulfill a promise he had made him. So when it became manifest to him that he was an enemy of God, he repudiated him. Indeed Abraham was most plaintive and forbearing."[1]

Necessity of Steadfast Resistance against Disbelief

Emulating the Holy Prophet (s) means to follow the truth while standing firm against all enemies and conspirators. Emulating him (s) means that when we see ourselves surrounded by numerous adversaries, we remain staunchly resolute in support of our just cause, rejecting all talk of weakness and indignity while preserving our unshakable trust and faith in God Almighty. Such is the determination of those who truly follow the Blessed Messenger (s); determination that remains as solid as a rock even if it leads to embracing martyrdom.

﴿مِّنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا۟ مَا عَٰهَدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَمِنْهُم مَّن

قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُۥ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَنتَظِرُ ۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا۟ تَبْدِيلًا ﴾

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Tawbah: 114.

"Among the faithful are men who fulfill what they have pledged to Allah: there are some among them who have fulfilled their pledge, and some of them who still wait, and they have not changed in the least…"[1]

If we observe that our enemies are far superior to us in terms of numbers, industrial power, technological capability and material resources, this apparent superiority must not induce dread into our hearts. Instead, we must rely upon the eternal and infinite strength of God Almighty, because He never abandons His faithful servants. We might be weak in our numbers and resources, but with His aid and assistance we will be victorious against our foes. It is He who intervenes in the most delicate of situations, invalidating all material calculations and plans by revealing to the world that only He commands true and unparalleled power. Thus, He shames the arrogant tyrants who believe they are powerful, but whose strength is only a façade. It is He who destroyed the apparent superiority of Islam's enemies in the Battle of Badr, exposing their true and existential weakness and tearing apart the baseless myth of their hegemony.

﴿وَلَقَدۡ نَصَرَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِبَدۡرٖ وَأَنتُمۡ أَذِلَّةٞۖ فَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُونَ﴾

"Certainly Allah helped you at Badr, when you were weak [in the enemy's eyes]. So be wary of Allah so that you may give thanks."[2]

We should become like the Basīj volunteers, who were resolute in their spiritual love for God Almighty, with their

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Aḥzāb: 23.
2. The Holy Qurān, Āal-i 'Imrān: 123.

hearts full of His remembrance and trust. They fought an enemy that was armed to the teeth and enjoyed the unquestioned support of all the major world powers and yet, with empty hands, they were able to resist all their attacks, finally kicking them out of our country with Almighty God's help and assistance. If we develop such pure faith and resolve, we too would be able to overcome our enemies today. When we fight in Almighty God's way, we are always victorious, regardless of whether we achieve apparent success in this world or not. Even if we die as martyrs while struggling in His sacred path, we would still be victorious, because reaching eternal prosperity in the Hereafter is what makes a person successful.

﴿ قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَآ إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَىٰنَا ۚ وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَآ إِلَّآ إِحْدَى ٱلْحُسْنَيَيْنِ ۖ وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ أَن يُصِيبَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِهِۦٓ أَوْ بِأَيْدِينَا ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوٓا۟ إِنَّا مَعَكُم مُّتَرَبِّصُونَ ﴾

"Say, 'Nothing will befall us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our master, and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust.' Say, 'Do you not await one of the two excellent things (victory or martyrdom) to happen to us? … "[1]

We must deepen our convictions and strengthen our spirits through a more profound remembrance of God Almighty.

1. The Holy Qurān, Al-Tawbah: 51, 52.

We must invoke the Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) to act as intermediaries on our behalf in God's divine court so that we can win His sublime favor. We must rely solely on Almighty God's eternal power, always remembering that He is undefeatable and that His will cannot be averted. However, we must ask ourselves, "How deeply do we truly believe in God Almighty and the Hereafter? Do we really have firm belief in these truths, or has our religion become a matter of mere lip service? Has our faith survived our constant love affair with worldly desires and ambitions?" We must follow and emulate the Sacred Messenger (s) as well as other religious apostles and saints in order to resist our enemies relentlessly. Our resistance must remain solid as it continues to the very last drop of our blood. We must abandon this nonsensical and delusionary talk of tolerance, academic dialogue and peaceful co-existence with those who seek to destroy us and our convictions. These are meaningless slogans. Academic dialogue has no utility in a time of heated war, neither can any such antics overcome the onslaught of a vicious and rabid adversary. The followers of Satan and all those who knowingly oppose the truth will never abandon their animosity. This is exactly why the Last Imam, the Blessed Baqīyat Allah al-A'zam (as), will reappear with a sword in his hand.

Those who insist that the so-called world community wants dialogue and not war should pay a quick visit to Palestine and see how the modern world engages the oppressed people of Palestine in "peaceful" dialogue! Are they ready to even acknowledge the smallest and most insignificant of the Palestinian's inherent rights? Is it not true that they drop deadly bombs on scores of innocent

men and women, killing numerous school children and even infant babies, all under the guise of American human rights and democracy? They even burn down the Palestinians' food resources, setting fire to their farms and fruit orchards, while laying a stifling siege to their territories. When will we stop being fooled by these devils? When will we abandon the impossible dream of achieving dignified peace with such blood thirsty enemies? If they penetrate our defenses and gain authority over our lives, the tragic experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq will be repeated in Iran as well. Now, if we are to die anyway, is it not better to die fighting for God Almighty and in defense of our ideals and beliefs? Is it not better to embrace martyrdom in this manner? Today, the examples of Afghanistan and Iraq lie before us, tomorrow, they will turn towards Arabia and Syria. Therefore, in light of Islam's religious teachings, as well as common historical experiences, all Muslims are duty-bound to preserve and protect the dignities and territorial integrities of their respective countries. They must expand their potential and capability to resist the enemy by enhancing their determination and putting their faith and trust entirely in Almighty God's divine assistance.[1]

1. This speech was delivered on the 4th of December, 2002.